A NOBLEMAN OF ITALY

(ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA)

Rev. A. Koch, S.J.

A NOBLEMAN OF ITALY

Nihil obstat

INNOCENTIUS APAP. S.T.M., O.P.

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Sua Eccellenza Luigi Gonzaga di Castiglione

From the only actually authentic portrait, now in the Amrasser Collection, Vienna

Frontispiece

A NOBLEMAN OF ITALY

THE STORY OF ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

By

REV. A. KOCH, S.J.

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TO THE BOYS OF CLONGOWES

WITH THE HOPE THAT IN THE FUTURE AS IN THE PAST

THEIR ALMA MATER MAY INSPIRE THEM

WITH A DOUBLE SHARE OF THE SPIRIT

OF THEIR PATRON

ALOYSIUS

DAWN

IT was a beautiful, sunny morning in March, 1568.

The shimmering tints of dawn lay like a robe of glory on the Castle of Castiglione and on the little town that nestled at its foot. Far aloft the snow-clad Alpine peaks glowed rosily in the sun's young splendour. And within the castle joy glowed in every room and corridor.

A mortar-shot from the castle walls broke the morning stillness. It was followed by a salvo of other shots, which rang out in rowdy joyousness upon the fresh spring air. Soon from the little town below came the answer. The cheery bells of San Nazario, the parish church, took up the tune, and vied with the rolling echoes of the cannon in bearing the joyous tidings out beyond the city-walls, out into the great world. Donna Martha Tana Santena, the Marchioness, wife of Prince Ferrante Gonzaga di Castiglione, had presented her husband on the previous evening with a little son.

March 9th was Aloysius' birthday.

Don Ferrante was the happiest of men. His dreams were realized. The family of Gonzaga

di Castiglione had now a male descendant to carry on the race, the margravate a future regent, the wide estates an heir. The name of the Gonzagas, known and esteemed in the court of the German Emperor no less than in that of the King of Spain, would rise again to all its old magnificence. For there was no question in the father's mind, but that in the days to come the young scion of Gonzaga would write a new page of glory in the records of his race.

He was right! His dreams of his son's greatness were destined to come true, though in a sense very different indeed from that which he now hoped and planned. This child, his hope and pride, would indeed write in the annals of Gonzaga leaves of new renown, leaves which alone would remain living and untarnished when all the other pages of that history had long since crumbled into the dust of forgotten things!

Another, a Greater than Don Ferrante, had picked out this child from all eternity for a great career. Long before his birth even, God's Providence had begun its unseen, but resistless work.

Years later the mother told of the thoughts which God had put into her heart just before Aloysius was born. Through all her mother's longing and silent hoping, she felt inspired to pray again and again for Heaven's grace and blessing upon her expected little one. More

than that. As if she had already seen in vision God's thoughts and plans for her babe, she carried him in ardent prayer before the Almighty's throne, and offered him in sacrifice to the Lord. In so far as she, the mother, could, she consecrated his young life already to the exclusive service of the Eternal.

God heard the mother's prayer, and accepted her sacrifice. Donna Martha knew it, as in her deep, simple, Italian faith she looked back over the circumstances, seemingly so unimportant, and yet so full of meaning, which accompanied his birth.

Mother and child were in grave danger, and their lives were almost despaired of, when Donna Martha, with her husband's consent, consecrated herself and her little one to our Blessed Lady of Loreto. It was, therefore, under the protection of Mary that little Luigi's life began. And when the child of her care was baptized, and laid, crying weakly, in his mother's arms, she caught him to her bosom in an ecstasy of happiness, and, making the sign of the cross upon his tiny forehead, dedicated her little son from the very beginning of his life to God.

Weeks later the solemn baptismal ceremonies were performed, and the name Luigi (Aloysius, or Louis) was given him. But God long before had "laid His hand upon him" (Ps. cxxxviii. 5), and called him by his name: "Thou art mine!"

(Is. xliii. 1). Already the first rays of His grace had fallen on the slumbering soul, filling it with a light and a beauty that would never know the night of darkness and of sin. Luigi remained always a child of grace, a child of God, in the full, splendid meaning of the word.

For it is in the kingdom of grace as in the world of nature: the towering mountain-peaks receive the morning splendour long before the valleys round awake to life. When, deep down below, the mists still drift and darkness reigns, away above amongst the heights the shining glacier rises from the shades of night. It begins to glow, first faint and scarcely visible, then ever deeper, ever fuller, till, dipped in royal purple, it meets with a kiss of welcome the sun's first ray, and calls the sleeping valleys to awake to the glory of the dawn.

EARLY MORNING

LITTLE Luigi's early childhood was still and sheltered, clear and fresh as a hedge of may-blossom or a mountain stream. From his mother he inherited a good, pious, kindly heart, while his father gave him of his own fiery, thrustful, strong nature. And so both parents were satisfied with their Luigi; and father and mother, each in their own way, cherished their silent plans for the future.

A child's soul is like a child's face: as yet unformed, unstamped. And yet there lives already in the little heart much that is quite particular, quite its own. There are in the life of every child happenings apparently small and unimportant, which yet reveal with striking clearness the deeper currents in the tiny soul, the forces at work within, the direction of development. These little incidents are seldom recorded, and are therefore all the more valuable, especially in a life which later on developed into sanctity. For they grant us a fleeting glance into the secret workrooms within the heart, where nature and grace mould together from the beginning a great work of art. A masterpiece, which even in its

full perfection bears traces of its origin and distinctive, natural character.

It was during play. The whole cheery band of children which the castle sheltered within its walls were there enjoying themselves. Aloysius, hardly five years old, must have been amongst the youngest.

They were tired of running and jumping, and began a game of forfeits. Soon all were keenly interested, giving and paying their forfeits.

Then the little lady who was mistress of the game had a sudden idea. It was her turn to give forfeits. Her shadow danced with her, as she skipped about the court-yard, and fell by chance sharp and clear on the castle wall. The saucy little head standing out in perfect, bold silhouette reminded her of something she once had seen in grown-up people's games. So with a quick gesture she turned to Luigi, whose turn it was to pay his forfeit. And the haughty request was accompanied by a toss of her little head, and a coquettish glance of her eye : he was to go over and give a good, hearty kiss to the black lady there on the wall.

Shrieks of childish laughter, then a hush of expectation. All eyes were turned to Luigi, to see what he would do.

He did something, however, which they had never seen him do before. The little girl had hardly ended, when a quick, scarlet blush spread

over Luigi's sensitive face. Then open anger and indignation flamed from his eyes. His lips shut determinedly. His little head was thrown back. He turned quickly and was gone, before the little group had time even to be astonished at his action! And that evening he returned no more.

From that day on Luigi would not hear of forfeits. He was no less gay, lively, whole-hearted at play than before; but in this matter he was unyielding. He seemed simply to have crossed forfeits off his list of games.

That is so typical of the Aloysius of the future! It may well be doubted whether he was old enough at that time to have any clear idea as to the reason of his conduct, or whether he was not influenced by a certain ultra-sensitive, almost unconscious, inner repugnance—we have examples of something of the kind in the early years of many saints—or whether perhaps a word let fall by his mother had not something to do with it. That is not the point. The little incident itself is of no importance. But immensely significant is the certainty, the rapidity, the decision with which Luigi followed the inner voice. There was no question of dallying, of discussing the matter with himself, of considering what the others would say; there was only the question of obeying the call—which was nothing else but the call of a delicate conscience—and following it unshakably.

As Aloysius acted here, so he acted all his life. He kept his conscience clear and sensitive. He did not overpower and deaden it by reckless, hasty following of impulse. He did not blunt it by indifference. And so he held the first prerequisite for all development of inner greatness. Many are the paths which lead downward; one only leads towards the heights. And it is God's will, that on this one path man's conscience shall be the signpost. It is his last counsellor, when in his upward climb he reaches a forking of the ways, where he must needs decide. Aloysius heard with reverence, and obeyed with humility, the voice of this counsellor; and so his soul remained in the light.

"The light of thy body is thy eye (thy conscience). If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome: but if it be evil, thy body also will be darksome. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness! If then thy whole body be lightsome, having no part of darkness, the whole shall be in light." (St. Luke, xi: 34–35.)

LIGHT AND SHADOW

LUIGI'S first trip from home! He was at Casalmaggiore, at the camp, where at the moment the expedition against Tunis was being fitted out.

The father had taken the boy, who was hardly five years old, with him, in order to show him early on something of a soldier's life. He wanted, too, to prevent Luigi from becoming too soft and pious there at home with his mother. That did not suit the father's thoughts at all. His dreams were of a young Count of Castiglione who would become Generalissimo of his Catholic Majesty!

And so the little captain in buckler and helmet, with the tiny top-boots and wide breeches, with his dagger by his side and his halbert at his shoulder, strutted along proudly beside his father. The old veterans looked smilingly after the little lord. He was their idol and their pride, especially since the day when his courage and pluck in bearing pain had won the hearts even of the roughest of them all. He had let off a musket, and the powder had struck back and burnt lamentably his poor little face. Luigi had bitten back the tears, and every sign of pain.

It was not long until another exploit proved that he was not to be intimidated by such a trivial misfortune.

One day, just at the sleepy hour of midday, when the whole camp was quiet and the soldiers resting after their dinner and dozing peacefully, there came suddenly from one of the outworks the sound of a cannon-shot.

Phew! There was a sudden end to rest and sleepiness! All jumped up in alarm; nobody knew what had happened. The first thought was of mutiny. Don Ferrante, the commander of the camp, at once sent a troop of soldiers out in the direction whence the shot had come. They found the still smoking cannon, and discovered —their little friend Luigi, picking himself up painfully out of the dirt in front of the cannon's wheels! He had contrived in all secrecy, while everybody else was taking their noon-day siesta, to collect the necessary powder from the powder-flasks of the soldiers. With immense difficulty he had managed to charge the little field-piece and fire it. Unfortunately, at the recoil of the cannon, which he had not anticipated, he had nearly fallen under the wheels.

For the father, however, such a breach of discipline was no laughing matter, and he called the little "mutineer" to judgment. He fully intended to have him tried and punished by martial law. But as soon as officers and men

heard that the unlucky little adventurer was going to receive punishment as well as bruises and a fright, they interceded for their favourite, and would not rest content until the father relented and let off the culprit.

A little while later, and it all seemed forgotten. Not merely the cannon-shot, which had so narrowly missed being disastrous, but the whole rowdy life of the soldiers and the camp.

Luigi had returned home to Castle Castiglione to his mother, while his father away in distant Tunis was fighting against the Turks. The little captain of camp-days had laid aside buckler and helmet in the armoury, and exchanged them for slate and slate-pencil. The free-and-easy rambling through tents and trenches was ended; now came the sitting still and learning.

And yet the happenings of the camp were still to have far-reaching consequences in Aloysius' inner development.

It came about thus. He had picked up from the soldiers a number of expressions, which—well, of which he would have been far better in ignorance. He did not understand their meaning, of course; but he was mightily impressed by their rude vigour, and in order to play the man himself, he soon fell into the habit of using them. All the more so, because he was encouraged and admired by the old soldiers, who were intensely amused at the little fellow with the strong language.

And, of course, what he learned in the camp he brought home with him. His mother and his tutor Francesco del Turco were not at all too well pleased at Luigi's new vocabulary. Now one day, as Luigi had just let slip again one of these expressions, del Turco took his pupil to task, and reprimanded him severely for using such improper words.

Del Turco's rebuke, short though it was, was most unexpectedly effective. His words fell like living sparks into this delicate heart; they were sufficient for Aloysius' whole life. Never from that moment onwards, the tutor could testify later on, did a single word cross Aloysius' lips of which he might feel ashamed.

But that was only the external. The real importance of the incident lies far deeper. For the exterior shock was for Aloysius the beginning of that inner experience which he called later his "conversion."

An intermittent fever, which tied him with interruptions for a year and a half to his bed, also played its part in his interior development. And grace, to judge at least from remarks let fall by Aloysius later on, must just in those days have set to work very vigorously in the child's heart.

The realization of sin, and of its opposition to holiness and God: that was, so far as we now can know, the great new thought which gripped the awakened spirit of the boy so powerfully. It

seems almost as if this push from without shook to life in Aloysius all that was high and noble, and called him to defence against the enemy who serpentlike was creeping into the paradise of his soul. His eyes were opened; and he had knowledge of good and evil *before* he fell from the glory of a child of God, and incurred sin's nightmare consequences.

There had been revealed to him one of the greatest realizations that can be shown to a human soul.

The fruit of that period was a fear of the unspeakably holy will of God; and this was the foundation of all his progress. It is true that in a few years' time God's love filled Aloysius' pure heart entirely, and gave the enthusiasm and courage that made possible the heroisms of the future; but holy fear trembled through even his most fiery love, and kept him always ready before God in childlike submission and loyal service.

The first meeting with sin—which is a test of the real worth or worthlessness of a man's deepest, inner self—meant for Aloysius a complete breach with it. From now on "enmities were set" between him and the serpent; implacable and lifelong. The sins of childhood, which hardly seem to us more than hoverings round the flame of sin (though Aloysius himself always took them very seriously, even later on) were the great failings of his life. At least, such was the

impression of those who later were privileged to see into his heart: his friends and spiritual directors.

Aloysius was hardly more than seven years old when these first developments had already taken place. He had, in a very real sense, been "converted"; that is, he had turned to God with his whole heart. With that beautiful gravity and earnestness which is peculiar to strong characters he began to look out into life. Not old beyond his years, but through God's grace *early-wise*. Many a time, as he knelt at his mother's knee and looked up at her with his big, dark eyes, it seemed to the noble lady that she was looking down into a paradise of purity and love of God. She called Luigi her little angel; and she was right. For these are the virtues of the angels: purity and love.

IN FLORENCE

FIRENZE LA BELLA!

Ay, not for nothing has she been called "the beautiful," this old city on the Arno, with her lordly palaces, the rich, moving life within her walls, and her majestic surroundings.

It was not easy for Donna Martha to part from her two eldest, Luigi and Rodolfo; but the father insisted. For nowhere could they learn courtly manners and the polish of gentlemen so perfectly as at the court of the Medici in Florence. So they left home.

The Archduke Francesco would indeed have preferred to have kept the two boys in his own residence. But they were come to learn and to gain experience; and so they rented their own apartments. They had many an opportunity, of course, of appearing at court. Luigi's letters, in the childish handwriting of a little boy of ten—with more than an occasional mis-spelling, too!—brought a faithful record home of all their little and their large experiences.

"Yesterday we went out to look on at the burial of the Archduchess." (Thus in a letter of April, 1578.) "The ceremony was very fine and

lasted three hours." He goes on to give an account of the funeral procession, going into every detail, from the dresses of the mourners to the weight of the big, brown wax-candles.

Not so very long after, all the mourning seems forgotten—and not only by the little letter-writer! A letter of August 27th recounts :

"Last Sunday we were at the grand-stand with the Archduke, looking on at the races. The prize was the red cloak of St. Anna. The Count di Bagno's horse won.

"On Friday we went over to Don Giovanni (the Archduke's youngest brother). He did not want to go out, so we stayed in with him, and cooked all sorts of things. But he would not eat anything, because he was fasting for the Jubilee which the Pope has proclaimed. . . . We are going to try to gain the indulgence next week, and will remember you in our prayers, as we have always done and still do.

"Yesterday we were with Giovanni at the Pitti palace. As he was going with us to the fountain, the princesses arrived with a great number of hounds. They said that they were going to let the dogs, too, run for the cloak of St. Anna! During the races the Archduke himself came out of the garden gate and looked on. He had only four courtiers with him. We all ran, the princesses, Don Giovanni, and

we ourselves. The game lasted till evening.

"We went to Mass during these last holydays, too, in the church of the Annunziata, and prayed to the Mother of God for good luck and contentment and joy for you.

"We are getting on very well. We are working hard at our studies. In conclusion, we kiss your Highness's hand.

"Your Highness's

"Most obedient son,

"ALOYSIUS GONZAGA."

Letters like these were a real joy to father and mother at home in Castle Castiglione. The only pity was, that Aloysius could not put in a photograph of himself in his new court uniform! He was the perfect young noble, in his white, shimmering, satin doublet with gold and silver lacings, with gold buttons and red-sewn buttonholes. Over it he wore a short, black cloak of silk and samite. At his left side he carried in an elegant sheath a dagger richly gilt, with gold and silver lace-work on the hilt. Stockings of finest cloth, slashed breeches, white shoes and embroidered gloves completed his attire, while on his head he wore a cap of black samite with a white egret's plume.

And the bills for it all came back from the tutor to Castiglione, so that the father must have been

able, indeed, to make a fair mental picture of his sons at court. Those bills tell all sorts of interesting stories, by the way, about the doings of the pair in Florence. There is one entry for dancing-lessons, another for the writing-master; a fairly substantial book-account, and a whole column for games and sport of all kinds.

In a word, the father was fully satisfied that his sons were being educated as befitted their rank and position.

There was one item, of course, of which neither the dry figures of the account-book nor Luigi's letters told. They left it hidden, because it could be expressed neither in ducats nor in a boy's words.

And it was this. Aloysius was no longer a child, an undeveloped school-boy, to whom these fine externals meant the whole of life. True enough, there was much of the child about him still, from his awkward writing to his whole-hearted pleasure in humming-tops and cross-bows. But through it all there ran a vein of something deeper than childishness, of something which pointed to coming maturity: the work upon himself, upon his own character.

One day most of all remained in del Turco's memory. It was a milestone in the development of the boy's soul.

Aloysius had asked him some time before to find him a confessor. Del Turco sent him to

Fr. de la Torre, the rector of the Jesuit college. Aloysius desired to make a general confession of his whole life. The reason, as he himself admitted later on, was this : through shame he had never dared to confess the chief sins of his life, the evil camp-expressions of a few years before. He wanted now to make good, thoroughly good, that deficiency. So del Turco brought his pupil, who had prepared himself with uncommon conscientiousness, over to the Jesuit college. Aloysius asked him to wait for him ; and del Turco agreed. But a few minutes later he was called to Fr. Rector, and found the child unconscious. Shortly after beginning his accusation Aloysius had fainted. Sorrow and shame over the faults of his past, as he saw them then, and the inner struggle to be perfectly honest and sincere had overpowered him.

He came to gradually, and was brought home. But hardly did he feel himself again than he asked to be let go back to the college. It was not his way to beat a retreat before a weakness of that kind.

This time he held out. That confession was his soul's baptism of fire ; and he held in grateful memory all his life the blessings it brought him.

Ever after that confession del Turco noticed in his pupil a certain conscious, energetic striving, a self-disciplining which was more than the ordinary goodness of a child. The ten-year-old

boy had his eyes already open to the worth of character and character-training.

From that day on were weeded out, in patient, daily labour for which no detail was too unimportant, whatever faulty traits the inward-seeking eye of the youth discovered in his own composition.

First anger, that weakness of the strong, which, at least at critical moments and interiorly, always gave Aloysius something with which to fight. In a few weeks he had fairly mastered it. There were no more fierce surges of passion; but the strength remained, tamed, bound, and re-directed towards noble aims.

That was his first victory. Then began the noviceship of the tongue. Aloysius had noticed that even still he often let slip a word which could hurt or humiliate others; and he set out to cure himself. He spoke in future only as much as was necessary; and simply renounced entirely all idle chatter: and this resolution he kept for seven years, until—a strange *volte-face*!—after his entry into religion he allowed himself again the freedom of conversation which he had voluntarily abandoned. What others learn for the first time in the silence of the monastery, he had already acquired: the proper use of the tongue.

It is a delicate proof of his tact and social sympathy, that during those days in Florence Aloysius in his dealings with his servants quite

deliberately set himself to follow out the real spirit of Christianity. Those were days, remember, of absolute monarchy and contemptuous aristocracy. But Aloysius kept himself free from the influence of his entourage; and by his reaction from all unworthy domineering, by his considerate and winning manners towards even the lowest of his attendants, he won from all a respect and admiration which lived on and appeared clearly years later in the evidence of the witnesses for his canonization.

The source of his strength and his perpetual spur to character-formation was the Sacrament of Penance. It was the steady, regular influence of this fountain of grace which developed within him that extraordinarily clear and definite conscience which later astonished even a Blessed Robert Bellarmine. He learned to observe the smallest stirrings in his own heart so closely, that for his spiritual guides he could dissect with the calm certainty of an anatomist the processes taking place within his soul. There was no trace of scruples about all this. His confessions were short, clear, and to the point. His confessor hardly ever needed to ask him a question. He himself, indeed, often asked for instruction or information; for he attached great importance to the advice of his spiritual directors, and gratitude towards them was a distinctive feature of his life. With his "hunger and thirst after justice" he

realized much more deeply than others the blessings which a young, seeking heart can win by yielding itself in trusting obedience to the mother-wise education of the Church. This much, at least, is certain: that Aloysius always viewed the Sacrament of Penance as a pillar of his interior life.

Somebody has said: "True manhood means a strong will directed by a delicate conscience."

If this be true, his stay in Florence was for Aloysius a preparatory school of true manhood. The will began the task with courage, and a delicate conscience directed operations.

In such circumstances, a great character could come to maturity.

MARY'S SON

FLORENCE was beautiful; but the most beautiful thing in all the lovely city was La Santissima Annunziata, the glorious church of Our Lady, with its side-chapel of the Madonna. And there, the most beautiful thing of all was the picture of the Annunciation.

Aloysius could not tear himself away from it; again and again he felt himself drawn to the consecrated stillness of the little chapel to kneel before the picture of the Immaculata.

Our Blessed Lady was seated in her own room, radiant with all the fascinating loveliness of virgin youth and beauty. Her head and her pure eyes that were the windows of her soul were raised aloft in ecstasy, to where the Holy Ghost was descending upon her from the Father in a golden beam of light. Before her in shining garment stood the angel of the Annunciation, waiting reverently with downcast eyes for her answer to the suit of the Most High.

There was an atmosphere of purity about the picture; and that is why Aloysius came. He loved to breathe this clear, cold, sunlit air of the

heights, which filled his soul with mountain-health and strength.

And yet something of maternal warmth, too, surrounded the boy here; for the scene was tense with the breathing of unearthly love.

So Aloysius gave himself over with his whole soul to the silent magic of the sanctuary; and as often as he went away, he took with him the picture of the Virgin in his heart, a quiet vision which never left his mind.

At first it had been the sweet attractiveness of Mary which had captured him. But, as he looked, there came home to him more and more in silent waves of grace the fuller, deeper meaning of the painting. He had no words as yet for this new knowledge which was here revealed to him. But soon a little book about the mysteries of the Rosary came into his hands, and brought him the sense of that which he had absorbed in living contemplation.

Without his realizing it, the picture of the Virgin had led him into the inner sanctuary of celestial purity, and he had felt himself seized in rapture by the spirit of this Holy of holies. *This* it was, he realized, for which the utmost depths of his own being strove: full and unreserved surrender of all the forces of his body and soul to the Lord, the God of his heart. Here in the shining form of the Virgin Mary he saw his ideal realized, embodied, glorified

to a pinnacle of majesty beyond all human words.

How precious must be the glory (he thought) of a heart *all* undesecrated, *all* turned towards Heaven, if even God Himself, as it were, through the words of the angel seems to pay this beauty reverent homage!

How this virgin offering of all one's being into the hands of the Lord must bring the creature near to the Creator, if Mary with such a look as this can gaze on Heaven!

All this Aloysius did not think in words; he *saw* it in the living likeness of the Virgin. And what he saw gradually began to press upon him with its gentle power. Strong and fervent, and yet so passionately light and clear, it came to his own soul like a message of love: beauty such as this is not born of earth. It was the Eternal Love wooing his heart, as the early sun-rays woo rose-buds in May.

It was not long till Aloysius understood the message to his heart. It seemed to him as if Mary rested her gentle eyes upon him—and what a heaven of purity, of grace, of beauty shone in that glance of hers! And while his spirit drank still in silent rapture from this spring of pure love, he heard, as it were, a gentle question floating towards him: "My child, will you not remain as I remained and am? Will you not give me your heart, that I may give it to Jesus to be His own—for ever?"

Aloysius understood.

His answer was simple and complete. Kneeling before the picture of the Annunciation he laid his whole, young, unspoilt being as a dedicated offering in Mary's hand, determined to belong from now on to the Lord alone, and to present to Him alone for evermore the undivided love of his heart.

He made a vow of perpetual virginity.

. . . . .

The future showed how perfectly Aloysius had grasped the meaning of virginal self-oblation, and how truly this promise had come from the very depths of his being. And the future showed too, what unique blessings this dedication brought down upon his soul.

The law under which man's nature has groaned since original sin was changed in him by the power of grace into its contrary. In other men the waves of sensuality fling almost ceaselessly the foam of their breakers upon the shores of the spirit; aye, only too often they sweep higher still, into the very sanctuary of the temple of God. But in Aloysius the sheer force of interior grace thrust its conquering way out from the spirit into the outer, lower world of the senses, and subdued the restless, clamorous passions into quiet and rest and peace. Men who knew Aloysius' soul to its last tiny fold from his own self-manifestations

have said that he went through life without a single temptation against chastity.

But at that time Aloysius, beyond all doubt, knew nothing of the kingly privilege that was his. He only knew that he concealed a wondrous treasure in his young heart, and that he bore it in a fragile vase. The one thought and the other gave him the consciousness of a high responsibility for the jewel he had received.

Clearly he perceived his task; and, faced with it, he grew up into a master-warrior, who even amongst the chosen band of youthful fighters for purity and undefilement stands without a peer. Soon he handled with the skill of a veteran the defensive weapon of self-denial, and kept it in use with an unrelenting firmness and decision, as if every moment might bring an enemy advance-movement, the preliminary to a big battle. With still more perfect master-hand he schooled his own forces and built up the means by which he on his side might carry the fight victoriously into the threatened territory.

So it came about that Aloysius united marvellously in himself battle-proved heroism of purity with its most secure possession; or, as the Church puts it, that the grace of God allied in him a marvellous innocence with the severity of a penitent.

Hence it was that he has become that resplendent figure of the world of youth, to whom since his

own day young fighters innumerable have looked up with confidence and enthusiasm, when they stood in the heat of the decisive battle for their life's ideal. They have seen his knightly form in arms and armour arise before their spirit; in his dark eyes the glow of holy, exalted love, his good sword in his right hand, and in his left his lily-white banner with the picture of the Immaculate Virgin.

And so, ceaselessly, he presses forward still through the dark night of the passions, through the hissing of poisonous serpents, unspotted like a blessed memory of a long-lost Paradise, shining like a far reflection of the future glory-land, where the wild song of the blood is hushed into silence in the music of the "new canticle" of virgin souls. "These are they . . . who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." (Apoc. xiv. 3.)

That the most chaste preservation of all that is finest in youth is possible, Aloysius by God's grace has proved. That it is a glory, all who have trodden his pathways know. And that the grace of unspoiled, heaven-willed purity may live on and flourish in the world of youth, is Aloysius' prayer to-day for all those whom he sees following courageously in his footsteps, and pressing forward to the glory-kingdom which was his ideal and his reward.

GROWTH

IGNATIUS, a master of the interior life, once laid down from his own experience this principle: that in the creature's upward striving towards the Creator, God's liberality goes hand in hand with man's big-heartedness. The master's saying was to prove its truth ever more and more in the life of the disciple.

By his act of self-consecration in Florence, Aloysius had handed over to God with the fervour of enthusiastic love himself and his whole being. God's answer was not long delayed. He rewarded the oblation of His youthful hero with a gift which at all times by all God's friends has been reckoned as one of the highest and most sublime: with the gift of prayer.

When Aloysius returned again to Castle Castiglione in June, 1580, it came over him like the discovery of a new world.

He had always been fond of prayer. Even towards the end of her life, his nurse loved to tell of the pious little lord, and how, as soon as he learned to read, he used to say the psalms and prayers so accurately and industriously from his little prayer-book.

But now he enjoyed an experience like that of a wanderer in the mountains, when on a clear morning he mounts to pinnacles never reached before. A new heaven seems to envelop the earth. Peaks which before seemed unapproachable now are close at hand. Where formerly he saw but walls of rock, high valleys come into view; and the eye drinks in distances of snowy light and beauty, which intoxicate the spirit with a wealth of glory.

Led by God's hand, Aloysius mounted the high ranges of the great eternal truths. He brought with him on his journey three companions, who never failed him: a keen, early-ripened, deep-searching mind, a child's pure, God-enthusiastic heart, and a courage daunted by no effort or exertion, if it but led upwards towards the heights, where the rosy shimmer of the glaciers hailed him with a mysterious promise.

God, His Essence, and His Works were, apparently, the thoughts which first fed Aloysius' spirit, together with the gripping realization of his own eternity. The deeper he penetrated into this world of the Eternal—and soon he sank so deep in prayer, that for him the outer world simply ceased to exist—the more completely his sensitive soul became transformed and transfigured by this higher knowledge, with which God enriched him so abundantly.

God attracted and enticed, and Aloysius

followed with joy: that was the story of these happy months which Aloysius now spent in his father's castle. With the whole of that energy which was typical of him, he embraced the graces which were offered, and showed by his conduct that he was determined to drink as deeply as he could of this pure joy.

His immediate attendants were, without his knowledge or desire, the first witnesses of his prayer. When he prayed alone in his own room, the valets de chambre often crept softly up to the door, and looked in through a slit at the scene within.

Lost to the world around him, the young lord knelt upon the floor before the big silver crucifix which was almost the only ornament in the room. At one moment his arms were wide outstretched from interior emotion, at another, his hands were folded on his breast, and he knelt motionless as before. And from the big, dark, boyish eyes ran down tears of happiness and love. . . .

For, in truth, happiness and love were henceforward the two main colours in the rainbow of Aloysius' prayer. How clear and confident his spiritual life was is shown by the mere fact that the kindly mysteries of God's goodness, providence, and love were ever the favourite subjects of his meditation. Moreover, there was in him a natural sensitiveness and depth of feeling, which in prayer developed to a wonderfully delicate

refinement; and which, for all his usual reserve, broke out sometimes even in his exterior demeanour. It was from these spring-days of prayer that tradition has caught up and remembered the pretty story, which reminds one of Francis of Assisi: how young Aloysius went downstairs, and on every step greeted with an Ave the Mediatrix of all grace. It was the overflowing of a thankful heart, which confided to the mother its own rich joy.

But Aloysius was not a receiver only. It sprang naturally from his whole character that he soon came to regard prayer, and to apply it with even firmer determination, as the great means of personal purification and sanctification. He wanted, as he said later, by prayer "to receive God's image in himself, and to re-form himself to the likeness of God."

"Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (St. Matt. v. 48.) This saying of the Lord re-echoed from now on over his whole life, not as a command, which the ear hears unwillingly and with repugnance, but as a clarion summons to the glistening heights of the perfect childhood of God, where the radiant face of the favoured one reflects the image of the Father.

Aloysius, fully convinced of the power of meditation, soon entered the ranks of the great men of prayer. When he began, he prayed for an hour in the morning, and for another hour in

the evening. Soon, however, the free hours of the day were not sufficient for him. The quiet and silence of night seemed to him more suited to persevering prayer; and so he used the freedom granted him to satisfy to his heart's full content his longing for intimate dealings with God.

Later on in Spain he found in a book by the great Dominican, Louis of Granada, new hints and suggestions for prayer and meditation. Encouraged by this he began his well-known battle with distractions during prayer, which, after attempts renewed mercilessly again and again and after many hours of failure, ended in the victory of the spirit. Henceforward nothing could thrust its distracting way between God and the young soul.

In the struggle for his vocation the ardour of his prayer reached its maximum: a burning, consuming flame, which gave way later in religion to a gentle, fervent warmth pervading his being and transforming his whole inner life to uninterrupted prayer.

Aloysius had become, then, a man of prayer; and he remained so. It was his deliberate will. To pray, to sink himself in God and in His world, this he loved almost passionately, after he had once experienced the power of this means of grace.

But his praying did not make him a stranger

in the world, nor weak-hearted, nor terrified before rough reality ; it made him simply superior to the world. Great and strong and sure of his aim he went through life. There was, doubtless, somewhat of a cold, mountain air about him. But that is the atmosphere which sweeps around the peaks.

It was in prayer that Aloysius won that lofty mind and disposition which were so much admired in him in the court and in the cloister. And it was in prayer, too, that he learned that modesty and self-discipline which won him so many hearts.

The truth is, that without prayer, and without *his* prayer, Aloysius' life remains a riddle. With his prayer, and in his prayer, everything is obvious and understandable. How could a young princeling give up honour, pleasure, all ? How could he, despite all this, count during his whole life one happy day after the other ? Why did the earth matter to him so little ? And why did he, nevertheless, look earth's realities so squarely in the face, and handle boldly yet skilfully like a man the tasks which life by no means spared him ?

The answer to these and all suchlike questions is given by the hours which Aloysius in his quiet chamber spent in prayer, strong and fervent in good as in harder days.

Here there grew up in him that unshakable, living Faith which ruled his striving ; here his

character was steeled to a world-conquering greatness.

In prayer he found the light and strength for a life which swept up above the humdrum of earthly greatness into the high spaces of eternity.

The meditation of that which alone is eternally lasting and alone has eternal worth, the clear, logical expression of this knowledge in all his deeds have lent to Aloysius' being, even here on earth, a something which does not pass away ; a something, which will live on, so long as the eternal in man strives for its fulfilment.

DISCIPLESHIP

THERE was a second element, too, which, just at that time of ripening knowledge of God, gave a mighty impetus to the soaring of Aloysius' interior life. This time, as once before in Florence, a book served God's purposes. It was the Catechism which St. Peter Canisius had prepared specially for students. This epitome of Christian doctrine contained in an appendix a number of meditations on the Personality of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in which the holy man had written down in pithy words his own ardent love of the Redeemer.

These meditations opened another new world for Aloysius: the knowledge and love of Christ.

And now, because the simple considerations emphasized above all the Lord's *interior* life he pressed forward step by step into this inner treasure-house. What he saw won his noble heart for Jesus. And "he stayed with Him" (Jo. i. 39); he became a disciple.

What Aloysius learned from the Lord in these first days, we find nowhere recorded. But we can draw our conclusions from what the Lord became to him in a few years' time.

Though even later, we must admit, it is almost exclusively tiny little incidents alone by which Aloysius allows us a glance into his soul. It is almost as if his love to the incarnate Son of God was his heart's secret, which he revealed to others only reluctantly and under pressure.

When we find him, however, kneeling alone with outstretched arms before the Crucified, when we see him later return glowing with love and enthusiasm from the communion-rail, then we begin faintly to sense what Jesus was to him.

But how intimately his life had grown up into Christ, he revealed one day, without in the least intending it, in startling simplicity to his mother. It was in the year 1584, on the return journey from Spain to Italy. The grief at the father's resistance in the matter of Aloysius' vocation weighed heavily on both. One day Aloysius came—the ship had just landed—with an object in his hand to his mother. It was a stone; and the hand held it almost tenderly. He showed it to Donna Martha; and with a look in which were mingled pain and joy at the discovery, he pointed out the red spots with which the stone was sprinkled as with drops of blood. And his lips spoke the half-suppressed complaint: "And even still my father will not let me become a religious!"

His eye had seen in nature's toy only the wound-marks of the Lord. And with the speed of love his conclusion was already drawn: why

else had God let him find this remembrance of Jesus, if not as a confirmation of his belief that the Lord wanted him in His own immediate service? The conclusion may seem a surprising one; but it is understandable in a life whose one great passion had become the greatest possible similarity with Christ.

It was the same a few years later, when, a poor religious at last, he went begging through the streets of Milan. His companion, following a little ruefully in the young count's footsteps, heard again and again from Aloysius' lips a scarcely-suppressed cry of joy: "Christ went this way too! The Lord also begged for alms!" And then the other understood why Aloysius had come to him in bed late in the evening of the day before, and informed him radiantly that Fr. Rector had granted leave to him (Aloysius) to go out and beg. The "transforming" love, as the masters of the inner life call it, had become the great passion in Aloysius' life; it was the longing "to be made conformable to the image of the Son of God" (Rom. viii. 29) which filled the disciple of the Saviour with such deep and enthusiastic happiness.

But this longing, in all things to be like his Lord, revealed itself most strikingly of all in a little incident which occurred shortly before his death. It was the evening of the day before he died. His friend and intimate Cepari sat by the

bedside, and held his hand beneath the dying youth's head, so that he might be able to gaze more easily upon the crucifix fastened at the foot of the bed. Aloysius was wearing a light head-covering to protect him against draughts. After a long look at the figure of the Crucified, the damp hand crept suddenly up to his head, and pulled off the covering. Cepari thought that it was merely a spasmodic, meaningless gesture of his dying friend's, and put the cloth back again without speaking. A little later, Aloysius repeated his exertion. Again the watcher by the bedside interfered, and said conciliatorily:

"Brother Aloysius, leave it on. The evening air may harm you."

The patient cast another look of fervour at the crucifix; and softly from his lips came the words:

"He died that way too. . . . He had nothing on His head . . . !"

It was a last confession of his love. With the name of Jesus on his lips he died a few short hours later. The Lord had been the great love of his life, ever since those early days when, still a boy, his seeking heart had found in Christ his all.

"He was like me"; that was the driving force in Aloysius' life; the realization of the whole stupendous love of the Son of God, which brought Him from Heaven's glory to the earth to redeem mankind to God.

"I will be like Him"; that was the goal towards which all his striving tended; to imprint in himself the image of the Son of Man. With the ardour and enthusiasm of an artist he attacked the execution of the portrait. Trait after trait of the Lord's character—they were all holy and dear to him—he tried, as the years went by, to mould into his own life. As far, that is, as was possible for him; just as far as the Master desired of him. But always loyal and swiftly obedient to His call.

That was the sanctuary, the Holy of holies in Aloysius' heart, to which One alone had access: his love for the incarnate Son of God—a love so boyishly keen, so childishly simple, so manly-strong, that it pervaded and enveloped all the heights and depths and distances of his being.

FIRST COMMUNION

A WARM lustre shone in Carlo Borromeo's eyes. He had expected a young nobleman; and the boy who stood before him was more than that. A highly-favoured child of God.

Year in, year out, he, the great reformer-bishop of Milan, was forced to see so much that needed reformation, so much that was human, all too human. How he breathed free again, to discover, quite unexpectedly amongst his own kindred, a child of grace, in whom the fascination of an unspoilt child was allied with a strangely confident maturity!

The young prince had come in the name of his father, who was at the moment absent from home. He welcomed the Cardinal, who as Papal Visitor was visiting the diocese of Brescia and had just arrived at Castiglione, and invited him to take up his residence in the castle.

Carlo Borromeo returned his thanks for the reception; the invitation, however, he kindly but firmly refused. He, who never recognized in the Cardinal's dignity anything but a burden, was not disposed to change from his wonted simplicity because of his relationship with the house of

Castiglione. He declared that he would remain where he was, with the arch-priest of San Nazario.

That ended the official part of the visit; its prime object was accomplished. According to the calculation of the margrave's suite, which was waiting outside, Aloysius could have returned long ago. But this time they had to wait a while longer, a very long while indeed.

For out of the initial reserve had arisen after a few questions and answers a most animated conversation between the prince of the Church and his visitor.

Aloysius was radiant. He had found a master who knew and understood the ways of the soul. Here at last—that he realized very speedily—he could lay bare his heart. And so he disclosed everything, his questions, his doubts, his hopes and striving; he entrusted the knowledge of everything to this man, whose glance and words seemed to radiate an understanding kindness, experience, and sanctity.

To the Cardinal it seemed that he saw a silver fountain playing, clear and bright and pure. Here instruction was a sheer joy. In Aloysius' eyes there shone gratitude and enthusiasm.

Was not that hour like a reflection of the moments long ago, when St. John with swiftly beating heart and shining eyes first sat at the feet of Jesus, and drank with holy eagerness of the waters springing up to life eternal?

The minutes flew. Hours passed. For the disciple as for the master they vanished like so many moments.

And yet the most wonderful surprise of all was waiting for Aloysius still. Borromeo asked if he had been to Holy Communion yet. Aloysius said sorrowfully, no.

The Cardinal's ears were keen. The yearning which tried to hide itself in Aloysius' tones had not escaped him. It was the cry of a pure heart for its Lord and God.

Could he, dare he leave this hunger still unsatisfied?

With eyes aflame Aloysius listened to the words of his teacher, as he spoke to him out of the riches of his priestly heart about the wonders of the holiest of all the Sacraments.

Love and longing learn rapidly; and so the prince of the Church dismissed his overjoyed young friend eventually with the promise that he would give him as soon as possible the Bread of angels.

And now Aloysius was all aquiver with joyous expectation. Too slowly for his desires, and yet too quickly to satisfy his fervour in preparation, the great day grew near.

On June 22nd, 1580, on the Feast of St. Magdalene, Aloysius, during Mass in the parish church, received from the hand of the Cardinal his first Holy Communion.

It meant for him the dawn of a new life of grace.

There knelt the young nobleman, his hands folded and motionless on his breast, the fine lines of his features transfigured by an interior fire, while from beneath his closed eyelids there dropped down silently and ceaselessly tears of overflowing happiness and joy. He had his Lord in his pure heart; he had Him Whom his soul loved.

Yes, on this day a new life dawned for Aloysius. He felt the divine power in his heart, and was at once determined to approach this fountain of grace as often as he could. The custom of his time knew only weekly Communion; and so he counted the days till Sunday or feast day brought him anew the happiness of intimate union with his Lord and Master.

From now on, the focus of his thoughts and prayers became those all-too-short moments when he rested on the breast of Jesus in Holy Communion, and drank in strength from the depths of His Sacred Heart. The hours of immediate preparation and thanksgiving, faithfully though he used them, soon sufficed Aloysius no longer to drain to the depths the full chalice of happiness that was given him. The week-days were called in to help; to pile up his longing for this heavenly Food, to give a wide register to his songs of joy upon receiving It. He wished

to spend the first half of the week in thanksgiving and the second half in new preparation.

A spring-time had come into his heart, so pure and beautiful that in its loveliness he forgot more and more all earthly flowering, all earthly joy.

And Jesus? With high desire He, the Divine Sower, cast His seed over this eager field. Was He not sowing in virgin ground, which promised fruit a hundredfold?

At a good hour He had found entry into this heart. His young friend stood on the threshold of that age at which the whole promise of his youth, all the powers of his great soul would develop and reach their bloom. The Lord could not delay; He had to make quite certain of this heart, that it would give to Him, and to Him alone, blossom and fruit and all.

And He had to fill the young hero with enthusiasm for the big tasks which awaited him; to fill him with burning love and loyalty, which he soon would need so sorely. He, the Omniscient, saw beforehand the battles and the sufferings which the coming years would bring to Aloysius; and so, in the quiet, consecrated hours of Communion, He trained His disciple to a hero's strength and a hero's loyalty.

Nowhere does Christ let the atmosphere of His presence be felt more freely and more powerfully than in the Sacrament of Love. And no one breathes this atmosphere so invigoratingly

as the heart which is dedicated to Him in purest love.

The Church once put this truth in few and beautiful words: it is where she speaks of Jesus' beloved disciple, John. "Jesus loved him because the privilege of chosen purity made him worthy of more abundant love. For he was a virgin when the Lord elected him; and a virgin he remained always." (Breviary, Dec. 27.)

The saying was fulfilled in Aloysius, too. He loved the Lord, and was loved by Him. The Sacrament of Love kept their holy union ever fresh and living.

In the power of Holy Communion Aloysius grew on into one of those figures which are found only in the garden of the Church: strong with the strength of the cedar, immaculate as the lily's bloom.

THE SPIRIT OF CALVARY

THE principle which rules and determines all the workings of a life devoted to the service of mankind is this: the greater the circle which the rays of blessing and strength are to reach, the greater the cost in sacrifice which the individual striving for his distant brethren must pay.

The ancients had a vague suspicion of this law; and in the fabulous figure of Heracles, who at the cost of unspeakable toil purified the earth from crime and dross, they glorified it to a rather inadequate ideal.

Christ came and ratified the same law for His Kingdom with the words: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (Jo. xvi. 24.) And whatever still remained dark and mysterious about the meaning of His saying, He Himself unveiled, when in sufferings unparalleled He let His own body as a grain of noblest wheat fall into the sinful earth, in order by his death to raise up from her bosom rich, inexhaustible life.

Since that day on Golgotha, a new spirit breathes over mankind. The "lamb without

blemish" (Ex. xii. 5), which the Lord had ordered His chosen people to slaughter every year, was no longer known in the new community of the new covenant. The "Lamb of God" had satisfied superabundantly on the Cross for all. But there was a new mystery, never heard before: from this Cross holy fires flamed out through the night of human sin; and whenever a spark fell kindling in a mortal heart, a man arose and girt himself for the path to Calvary, with joy on his face and in his heart the expectation of a lofty happiness.

It was not sin which urged those who came; from the eyes of the vast majority shone unstained purity. It was not nicely planned compulsion, which pricked them forward; compulsion knows no such enthusiastic hurrying. The world had not driven them forth; she still held her arms wide open for the fugitives, and wooed them with a thousand fruitless charms.

No, from the heart of the Redeemer alone streamed the magical power which enticed them. One glance from His eyes was an abundant recompense for all the toils of the journey. And when He rested His head, tired with pain, on the shoulder of one of the elect, a noiseless question sounded in the favoured ear: "Will you help Me to redeem My brothers and your own?"

A glance of ecstasy, a whispered answer—and another "lamb without blemish" united his free sacrifice with the redeeming pains of Christ, "to

fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ . . . for His body, which is the Church." (Col. i. 24.)

Now the call to this Crusade had penetrated even to the castle of the Gonzagas. Not from the distant mount of Calvary; nearer at hand. It sounded through the castle chapel, when the bell of the Elevation announced the commemoration and return of Christ's death of sacrifice. There in silent adoration knelt a boy at prayer, immersed body and soul in the ceremony whose meaning was becoming ever more and more apparent to his grace-enlightened spirit. It was as if he heard no longer the sounds around him, as if his tear-dimmed eyes were looking into a far distance. When the priest raised up the Body of the Lord for adoration, tears of sacred emotion burst their bonds and flowed down his cheeks; the evidence, day after day, of what Aloysius experienced interiorly. He was swimming amongst the waves of sorrow and love, which mingled their tossing waters in the mystery of the unbloody Sacrifice.

The wonders of Redemption began to unveil themselves to the attentive disciple. What he contemplated in hours of prayer and in the Mass urged him to imitation. He had no other master than the Master on the Cross, from Whose wounds there shone out to him the love-stronger-than-death of the God-Man. He could rest no

longer. His heart urged him to the Way of the Cross. He wanted sacrifice, much and painful sacrifice, like His Lord.

As to how to find it, he was not long in doubt.

Aloysius was not exactly strong, but tough. It had never been his weakness to handle his body timidly and tenderly. And even though his physical powers were limited, was he not borne up by a will whose careless power had shown itself momentarily even in the little soldier, and whose capabilities had meanwhile been steeled by many sicknesses and tested by the exceedingly meagre dietary which, in view of his weak stomach, the doctors had prescribed for him? (His life was a time of perpetual fasting, but it was under orders.) There was added now the enthusiasm of grace and the secret call which gave aim and consecration to his resolve.

And so Aloysius began about this time that life so hard to outward seeming, to which posterity has given the name of "penance." This "penance" was not in him the bitter fruit of sin, but the tender blossom of a great, pure love: the love of Christ, the Crucified.

Exteriorly this life soon rivalled the mighty deeds of the heroic penitents of olden time: fastings, watchings, bearing of frost and heat, chains and disciplines. It is possible that he borrowed much from the saints of old, whose lives he studied during his young years with

predilection. Much was undoubtedly the invention of his ingenious love. It must be remembered that his period and his country saw nothing in the least wonderful or surprising about works of exterior penance; they were regarded as more or less a matter of course, and were even practised publicly. (That is probably the main reason why the father, who was wont to place perfect confidence in the good common sense of his eldest son, did not absolutely forbid them.) Outward penances were simply an invariable part of a Christian life; and a man had to be quite exceptional in this respect before his penances were worth recording.

Perhaps, too, in the beginning, the sayings and opinions of the classical writers of antiquity played their part in determining Aloysius' conduct. What he read in Seneca and Plutarch about the power of the spirit over the world of the passions and about the passionless tranquillity of the truly wise man, he translated automatically into his own thought-world. According to an interior law his strong spirit was obliged to "lust against the flesh"; and he sought after perfect interior tranquillity all the more eagerly, because he hoped then to be able to drink in the full depths of the happiness offered him in hours of prayer. The deeper he penetrated, however, under the guidance of grace into the fuller meaning of suffering as revealed in the Cross, the

more completely secondary these lesser motives, noble though they were, became. The joy of love and love returned received full play.

Let a man investigate, however, Aloysius' life of penance more closely, and he will find that its main characteristic is something quite peculiar; he was inspired and carried onward by a spirit of joy and joy-bred enthusiasm. There was nothing of the self-torturer, nothing of the man dragging himself wearily through life, little of deliberate resolution even about his freely undertaken self-denial and suffering. He *spoke*, of course, if he were questioned about it all, of his need of spur and rein; he spoke once, later on, of reparation for his own and the world's sins. But somehow it all sounds from his lips rather as a concealing than as a revealing of his inmost thoughts. These were not for men's ears. He revealed himself perhaps most clearly, when he expressed later on in religion to one of the fathers the extraordinarily mature thought: that for him it was the most certain proof of a man's holiness, if he saw him suffering with a good conscience. He meant, if on the one hand he knew him for a good man, and on the other, saw that God sent him opportunities of suffering.

To suffer in pure, high-hearted love, just like his Redeemer on the Cross and for love of Him: that became ever more and more for Aloysius the happy contents of life. He saw how Jesus had

suffered; He Who certainly had nothing in His soul to "tame," to "expiate," to "mortify." And his reverence for the Lord, his spirit of faith which showed him in the Lord's death of sacrifice the great life's work of Redemption, swept him on to heights of suffering and sacrifice far above the taming and expiation and mortification necessary for his own soul.

Was that prudent of him? To this question Aloysius would have known but one answer: Was it "prudent" of the Lord to reveal His love for us on the Cross so superabundantly? To give the last drop of His blood for man without weighing the greatness of His sacrifice?"

At the foot of the Cross all measuring-rods of prudence are too small. There remains only the wisdom of the Cross and the "folly" of a self-forgetting love. The disciple, too, wished to weigh his sacrifice, not with the weights of prudence, but with those of love.

A proof that he was on the right path might well have been for him the inexpressible happiness with which his Lord and Master filled him interiorly. How strong and persevering this inner beatitude was, is shown most clearly by his perplexity and confusion when, shortly after his entry into religion, he lost these consolations for a time. That was a quite unaccustomed experience for him; and he had to strive hard interiorly in order to adapt himself to the new conditions.

It was, however, only a passing trial. Soon the same enthusiastic joy inspired him again, which up till then had borne him over seemingly superhuman difficulties. And, as the time went on, the joy found ever more and more outward expression. His face, radiant despite all its seriousness, all in the house knew well; and what his lips did not speak, the brilliancy of his eyes betrayed.

Once only did he speak expressly of his own life of penance; and that in circumstances which must have added a peculiar solemnity to his words. It was shortly before his death. Seven days after he was taken sick—all believed that his last moments had come, even Aloysius himself—he asked the rector of the college, who with a number of visitors was present in the sick-room, to make a statement in his name to the bystanders. He explained that it had often been said to him during his life that he, like St. Bernard, would come to regret on his death-bed having treated his body too hardly. He wished, therefore, to declare to them and to all others that in this respect his conscience held out to him no reproaches. If he regretted anything, it was that he had not done everything in the way of penance which he might have done.

With these words, spoken in the light of a hastening eternity, Aloysius accepted without reserve all responsibility for his life and striving.

His inward-seeking eye, so clear and keen in matters of conscience, found nothing to condemn.

In the big, beautiful love of his heart for the Master he sacrificed, doubtless, much; but he knew that he had received in return incomparably greater things. Here both the gift and the answering present, both the love and the love returned, were out of the common order. And that is why Aloysius has borne with him as his secret to the grave the ultimate, the deepest meaning of his enthusiasm for the Cross.

Only a man who has received the grace of grasping to the innermost, utmost depths of his being the *mysterium Crucis*, and of living it into his life; only such a one can appreciate the full grace-treasures and the complete justification of a life like Aloysius'. And when the thoughts of Good Friday have become so ever-present to him that he can say of himself, as Aloysius did, that every day at the hour of the Lord's death he lives anew the redeemer-act of Christ, then in his heart and hands also the "wound-marks of the Lord" will burn and urge him to deeds like Gonzaga's.

And then from his life, too, doubtless, will shine forth the blessings which this life of sacrifice brings, according to the Lord's own words about the wheat-seed: "... But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

The fruit of Aloysius' "dying" He only knows Who sees in secret, and Who can tell the number of young hearts for whom at a critical moment the boy-prince of Gonzaga has obtained by his example and his prayers the strength of holy self-denial.

IN MADRID

THE year 1581 brought great changes into the life of the growing young nobleman and of the whole household. Don Ferrante at the invitation of King Philip II took his place in the guard of honour of Mary of Austria, mother of the reigning Emperor, Rudolf II, and sister of King Philip of Spain, and travelled to Spain with the whole family in close attendance on the Empress-Mother. There he was appointed Lord of the Bed-chamber; and his two sons, Luigi and Rodolfo, were placed in the immediate service of the young heir-apparent, Don Diego.

And so Aloysius found himself plunged suddenly into the pomp of the court life at Madrid, which at that time was unrivalled in Europe for conscious dignity and splendour.

During the first days it really seemed as if the thirteen-year-old boy was definitely and finally turned aside from his high endeavours, not merely by the flood of new impressions which surrounded him, but even more by the demands of his exalted position. The few free hours which remained over after his duties at court were accomplished had to be devoted with all

energy to the necessary studies. So the days passed like a flash ; and often before the youthful page found a moment to collect his thoughts the evening was already closing in after a hard day's work. And many a time when the tired eyelids sank in slumber, he had not spent even a fair fraction of the time in prayer which he used to spend in his father's castle. Even daily Mass and regular reception of the sacraments threatened to slip out of his life.

Things went on like that for a good while. Then, finally, Aloysius pulled himself together. He was not the boy to tolerate for very long such an interior defeat. His energy, his strong inner striving, and not least of all, special aids of grace soon set his feet on firm ground once more. If the day were too short to satisfy at once God and the world, well and good ; it was clearly more fitting that the world should yield a little rather than God.

His first quest, therefore, was for a good spiritual director ; and he made certain of regular and frequent Confession and Communion.

He took up his prayers again, too, in richer measure, even though this meant turning away many a polite visitor who knocked at his door.

When he discovered the introduction to meditative prayer by Louis of Granada, of which we have already spoken, and there read of hour-long and nightly meditation, his keenness for mental

prayer received a new impetus ; and he conceived the firm resolve to conquer all distractions and attain to a perfectly recollected prayer. Often at first he succeeded only after five hours of struggle; but that could not daunt his courage. In order not to be disturbed, he had recourse to a little strategy : he betook himself to the dark, wood-cellar. There it was quiet, even though not very comfortable.

The re-awakening of his interior life soon gave him back his mastery of outward circumstances. Never before, probably, had it been known at the Spanish court that a young noble who belonged to the immediate entourage of the Infante, and who was being educated with him, appeared in plain, worn breeches and darned stockings, just like a plebeian child, with none of the trappings, orders, gold chains and coats of arms, without which a grandee was almost inconceivable.

Aloysius risked all that. And, what is most remarkable of all, nobody made game of him on that account, or spoke of him contemptuously. He was, on the contrary, treated by all with esteem and distinction. Otherwise the father would not have allowed him for a moment to go about in such attire. Don Ferrante was at first in constant concern lest Aloysius, by his striking modesty and unpretentiousness, might bring discredit on his house. But when he saw the perfect polish and courtesy with which Aloysius behaved

even in his ordinary clothes, and when he noticed how deep an impression his mere personality made even in the highest circles, he let his eldest son have his own way in this respect. Aloysius was reasonable enough, too, to insist on this strange privilege of resigning all outward grandeur for himself alone; he never exerted the least pressure in the matter on his servants or his companions. It was enough for him, if he personally were allowed to be poor. He simply wanted to follow his Lord as closely as possible himself. He did not squint after others, either to criticize or to over-praise.

One day he gave a proof of his straightness and character, which was at least as striking a departure from tradition as his outward appearance, and which soon went the round of the whole court. The little Crown Prince was standing at a window, Aloysius beside him. The wind was whistling outside, and blew, without much regard for kingly dignity, straight in the princeling's face. This was too much for the future ruler; and with amusing seriousness he cried in lordly tones:

"Wind, I command thee, be still!"

Aloysius heard him, and probably thought that a word of enlightenment would be a wholesome change for one filled by so many influences and persons with the doctrine of the divine right of kings. He turned smiling to the Crown Prince,

and said to him very politely, but very clearly, as he could do so well :

" Your Highness may command men, who have to obey you ; but not the elements. For they listen to God's word alone, which your Highness also must obey."

Perhaps the young Infante made even his stern father smile a little, when he asked him at the next opportunity if what his friend had said were true. This much is certain : that King Philip took very well the courageous saying of the young nobleman.

Incidents such as these soon made Aloysius known throughout the whole court. The etiquette which reigned in those days in the court of Spain was rigorous and exacting. Nevertheless, it could hardly fail to attract attention that a young page should be so perfectly master of himself, his eyes, his ears, his tongue, and his whole bearing, that not even the closest observer could find anything in him to be corrected. Aloysius was, in fact, looked on as a quite remarkable apparition ; and more than once the secret admiration of the court society found expression in the half-serious, half-nettled judgment : " The little Count of Castiglione is not of flesh and blood ! "

Those who so spoke were in one sense right and in another wrong. The little count was not merely ordinary flesh and blood, he was even

very quick and fiery. He "could do evil things," as the Church says on his feast, "but hath not done them." (Ecclus. xxxi. 10.)

He could—but he did not want to. He wanted only to be loyal to his God and Saviour.

That was a high achievement at a court, where life, to put it at its very mildest, was one continuous round of incredibly boring and rigid ceremony. It sounds incredible, yet it is testified by his confessor of the time, that often in Aloysius' confessions his director found no matter for absolution. Through an atmosphere laden with poisonous germs of every kind, coarse and fine, the young hero passed without infection. It was his praying, his self-denial, his constant watchfulness, his unconcealed, fearless following of his own principles, above all, it was his Divine Friend in the Blessed Sacrament Who brought him through.

Later, in religious life, he was once asked in recreation to what order of pages he had belonged at the Spanish court. Before he realized it, the words had escaped him: "To the first class." He reproached himself, of course, immediately for such a breach of humility; but the words had been said, and they held more truth than he perhaps realized himself.

First class! That must have been the final verdict which Aloysius' guardian angel wrote down in summing up those years filled with the

life of the court. In those years the upward-striving seeker after God had succeeded in one of the hardest tasks which can be set to those whose lines are cast in the midst of a noisy, busy world : in *keeping* straight.

" Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish. . . . He hath done wonderful things in his life. . . . He could have transgressed and hath not transgressed ; and could do evil things and hath not done them. Therefore are his goods established in the Lord." (Ecclus. xxxi. 8-11 ; The Epistle of the Mass of St. Aloysius, June 21.)

GOD CALLS!

ALOYSIUS was not a full year in Madrid, when the Infante died suddenly after a few days' illness. The picture of the father broken with sorrow (he bore with Diego his fairest hopes to the grave); the funeral procession to the royal vault of the stern, majestic Escorial; the deep mourning of the court over the loss, so fraught with consequences, of the heir-apparent; all that made an indelible impression on Aloysius' grave spirit. It was a sermon in the transitoriness of earthly things, than which a more vivid and impressive could not be preached.

No wonder, then, that this early-mature boy turned his attention in those sad days to the final goal of his own life, and began to think about his future career.

His vocation had come up for decision.

Those who observed him only saw that he became even graver and more silent than usual. They did not know the reason. He was determined not to talk to men about his purpose, until to himself his way had become quite clear. His father, his mother, his brother Rodolfo, as interested counsellors, were out of the question. And

he wanted to walk securely. So he let God alone, his own reason, and the facts speak. He began to pray, to search, and to test, in order in this great question to be quite certain of God's will.

Once again he looked back into the past.

The self-consecration at the altar of the Immaculate in Florence stood out clear before his eyes. By his vow of perpetual virginity he had resigned his right to be the perpetuator of his family. That he realized quite clearly. And since that day, from this first oblation there had sprung up within his soul a row of further decisions, as buds according to an inner law developing into flower.

Already in 1579, one year after Florence, the twelve-year-old boy resolved to hand over his rights as eldest born to his brother, and become a priest. Hardly two years later, he took the next step; he decided definitely to give his life to God without reserve, and to join a religious order. There he could serve God most securely and most easily "with all his strength." This was the not-fully-realized ideal which had lent its deeper meaning to that first act of dedication in Florence. In his relentless logic and single-minded striving he had reached it without delay and without detour.

Now, however, arose the last and the decisive question: What order should he join?

And now for the first time he found the answer hard. He had come to know something of many orders in the course of his short experience. He had had personal intercourse with the little Capuchin monastery in Casalmaggiore, with the Jesuit college in Florence, with the Barnabites at Monserrato; in Spain he had visited the great Benedictine abbeys. Everywhere he had felt at home. In the Order of St. Francis, the perfect, contented poverty and simple humility attracted him powerfully; amongst the sons of St. Benedict, he loved the majestic liturgy, which permeated the whole day's work, and promised abundant gratification of his desire for prayer and meditation. In a word, every order, so far as he knew them, held an attraction for one side or other of his character and his ideals. It was just that which made the election so difficult.

It is typical of Aloysius that he even thought for a moment of choosing a monastery in need of reform, and of working there in the spirit of the Catholic Reformation. But the thought did not arouse his enthusiasm for very long. His whole character was better suited by the prospect of a new life in the spirit of a new age, rather than by any mosaic of reconstruction.

They were very various reasons which won him over gradually more and more to the Society of Jesus. Men were still alive who had seen Ignatius; and they had kept his fiery spirit living

in the young institute. The deeds and achievements of Francis Xavier and of his self-sacrificing followers were still fresh in the public memory, and were extended every year by new conquests. At home in Europe there was work on all sides in abundance. And it was only work in God's kingdom, it was directly apostolic labour alone, which could fully satisfy Aloysius' thrustful character. He had learned how to associate with men of all classes; he had a heart for all, and (as he might fairly tell himself) he had all the natural gifts which promised a successful apostolate.

The final cause which in the end led him to his decision was beyond all doubt the picture of the Son of God which he bore in his heart. It was the picture which the Apostle of the Gentiles draws in a few swift, powerful strokes in his letter to the Philippians (Phil. ii. 6), in the passage where he urges them to "let this mind be in them which was also in Christ Jesus." Christ in the divine glory of His majesty . . . lays down of His own accord crown and sceptre and ruler's garments in a kingly act of sacrifice . . . clothes Himself with the form of a servant, and walks in humility and simplicity as Man among men. He "humbles Himself"; He "becomes obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross."

This was the picture which Aloysius wished to resemble. For the son of a noble house had

already lived into his heart, deep and pure, the "mind which was in Christ Jesus."

To lay down his privilege of command, with the certainty (which was promised him as a Jesuit) of never again attaining to posts of honour and dignity, even in the Church itself . . . to be privileged to work in humility and simplicity as man among men, for God alone and for the salvation of souls . . . humble and hidden and obedient unto death, perhaps even unto death by martyrdom in distant lands: these were the prospects which meant for Aloysius the fulfilment of his highest ideals.

After days and weeks of prayer and pondering, Aloysius made his election: he decided definitely on the Society of Jesus.

Peace and joy within showed him that he had chosen well.

Nevertheless, he did not yet consider his decision as finally accomplished. He had done his part; now he wished to ask God, if such were His will, graciously to do His share, and accept the offering.

It was on the feast of the Assumption, 1583. After a Communion full of fervour and zeal he knelt in silent thanksgiving before the miraculous picture of Our Lady in the Jesuit college. His heart was praying to the Mother of Good Counsel for full clearness as to the correctness of his great resolve. Suddenly—how, he never told—there

came over him the perfect certainty that God Himself had called him to the Society of Jesus.

God's words are deeds. From that hour on it was simply not possible for him to doubt about the value of his choice; during the whole remainder of his life he never knew the smallest wavering in his vocation.

His first thought on leaving the miraculous picture was to go to his confessor, whose advice an inner impulse urged him to obtain. Hearing Aloysius' account of his election, the confessor could not doubt that his vocation was from God; he reminded him, however, that his father's permission was a necessary condition of his being accepted. Radiant with joy and confidence, Aloysius came to his mother and revealed to her his purpose.

The time had now come for him to speak. God had called.

THE STORM

THE young oak met the storm. The first blasts roared round the slender trunk, bending and tearing it, if perhaps the roots might be made to yield.

In vain! The trunk held firm. . . .

Aloysius had foreseen opposition. But not that the storm would break with such crushing fury.

The drama of the fight for the vocation had begun.

. . . . .

It was from the mother that the count heard the first word of Aloysius' decision. The valiant lady had made the last great sacrifice which she had seen approaching for many years, the complete sacrifice of her child. Now she wished to relieve the boy of the hardest portion of his task; she promised to break the news to the father. With that delicate tact and sympathy which only a mother and a wife can show she told Don Ferrante of Aloysius' dream.

The count was at first taken completely by surprise, then entirely mystified, then for many

minutes in a raging passion. His final answer was a rough " No ! " accompanied by passionate denunciations of his eldest son. Even the mother was not spared his angry words. He accused her of preferring Rodolfo, the second son, and of plotting to play the margravate into her darling's hands by tricking Aloysius away into a monastery.

That was the first answer. The mother bore the loathsome suspicion and everything else in silence ; but she could not spare her son the father's " No."

The margrave remained highly incensed. Let Aloysius not dare to come to him in person with such plans !

But Aloysius did dare. He came and explained his purpose calmly and steadily.

He did not get very far. He had hardly spoken a few sentences, when the father's anger broke out again like a sudden thunderstorm. Hard words followed ; and the count threatened his son—for the first time in his life—with the dog-whip. Let him clear out of his presence and never appear before him again with such ideas. Otherwise . . . an angry, but expressive gesture finished the threat.

Aloysius answered steadfastly, despite a swiftly beating heart :

" I beg God for the grace to suffer, if necessary, for my vocation, and to be patient in His love."

Then he went away.

During the next days no one dared to speak a word about the matter to the count. Any attempt to do so would merely have precipitated a new storm. The sultry atmosphere in the palace hung oppressively over all the household, most of all, of course, over Aloysius and his mother.

Then a command came from the father that his son's confessor be summoned. The priest arrived, and experienced a very unexpected reception. Reproaches, one more bitter than the other, rained upon him; he had, by his influence over Aloysius, ruined the count's fairest hopes; he had upon his conscience the misfortunes of the family, nay, the misery of the whole land; he was a fellow-conspirator in this dastardly plot against the father.

It was more than a few moments before the accused succeeded in getting in a word. To the accusation of being a fellow-conspirator he had an easy answer. It was only a few days previously, as he told the angry margrave, that Aloysius had informed him of his desire. He had, indeed, foreseen the possibility of such a choice for a long time; but the actual decision was almost as new to him as to the margrave himself.

Without the priest's in the least suspecting it, his words fanned into flame a faint spark of hope in Don Ferrante's breast. If that was the way

things stood, then this pretended vocation was of very recent growth ; and if so, there was every reason to hope for an equally sudden *volte-face*.

A great load was lifted from the margrave's mind. After all, matters were not as bad as they had seemed.

And—by Jove, perhaps the whole thing was only a manœuvre ? A new suspicion suggested itself to his mind. Revolting as it may seem, the smile and the sneer had already run round the court at Aloysius' clever move. The courtiers cynically took for granted that the threat of resignation and of entering a monastery was not meant seriously, but was merely a trick to bring pressure to bear on the old nobleman in order to wean him from his passion for gambling. For when was it that Aloysius informed his father of his intentions ? It was on the very day that, after losing persistently, he had ended by throwing away six thousand scudi on a single turn.

Improbable as the idea was, that a character like Aloysius would follow such doubtful paths, the father welcomed it joyfully, in order to escape being forced to believe the impossible.

But this hope, too, Aloysius shattered. He knew, of course, of his father's unfortunate passion ; for Don Ferrante himself had made use of him many times in delicate money matters which were to be kept secret even from his confidential secretary. Aloysius had borne the

revelations in grieved silence. Hence it was all the more painful to him now that these things were discussed publicly, and that even his own holy vocation was spoken of in connection with them. He could only declare the simple fact, that he had made his choice perfectly freely and without any ulterior motives, and that under all circumstances he would remain true to his decision.

Words, however, with Aloysius quickly led to deeds. He went a step farther, and did a thing which was in remarkable contrast with his otherwise so calm and so deliberate way of acting; a thing which showed that in the heat of the moment even the most self-possessed character may go too far.

For, one day—he had just been through the turmoil of fresh battles—as he was visiting the Jesuit college with his brother Rodolfo, he said good-bye to him at the door in all seriousness, and sent him home. He told the younger brother to inform his father than he meant to remain where he was permanently, and had no intention of returning home to the castle.

The result of the daring experiment was not difficult to foretell. It was not very long until the father's solicitor arrived at the college, and required Aloysius in all legal form to cause no further difficulties, but to come home with him at once. Aloysius did not give up quite so easily. He requested the deputy to go home again, and

answer his father that he had really better let him remain. The parting had to come some time, and better to-day than to-morrow.

That was emphatically too much for a man like Don Ferrante ! His own wish would have been to have gone down and dragged his son home with his own hands ; but unfortunately (or rather, very fortunately for both parties !) he was prevented by his old complaint, gout in the foot. Aloysius, however, received a command by return of messenger to come home without the least delay. He abandoned the bold venture, and returned. His reception was by no means as violent as he had expected. One thing, obviously, had become clear to the father during these battle-days : that here he would never succeed by force alone. If he were to conquer, it must be by other means.

And so the first act of the drama ended with a truce. . . .

The father's will was granite. But the son's was—diamond. That, the father did not know, and even yet had not learned. He imagined still that he had a child before him ; and for the child, the only law of conduct is his father's command. But Aloysius was older than a child ; and he bore in his heart a higher command, a holy summons which he had to follow. In face of this God's call, it behoved men's voices to keep silence ; and if they spoke against God's message, then it

was to them that he was bound to close his ears.

Through his realized vocation he had already become a man.

But two full years went by, before Don Ferrante saw that clearly, and yielded to the truth. Years of keenest struggle, which called into action on both sides the last ounce of effort, and so revealed clearly the motives and characters of the combatants. On the one side Aloysius alone, with nothing but grace and the call of God in his youthful heart; on the other the margrave, with all the weapons which stood to his hand to frustrate his son's plan, and to break his will.

Which would conquer?

The answer could not be long doubtful for any man who put the question truly. On the one side God Who wanted Aloysius for Himself, and Aloysius hand in hand with God; on the other the margrave, in league with earthly powers and with the things of the world.

What could the storm do, when the young oak stood with all its roots sunk deep in God? He who builds on God builds on a rock. And Christ Our Lord has said (cf. Matt. vii. 25) that clouds may burst, and floods may come, and storms may rage; through it all, the house which is built upon a rock stands firm.

The lightnings might shatter heaven, and thunder break like a falling avalanche: Aloysius stood firm.

UNYIELDING !

AS his service at the Spanish court had come to an end for a time, Don Ferrante decided to return home. And so the family sailed for Italy in 1584 in the squadron of High-Admiral Andrea d'Oria. It was a glorious voyage. Early summer along the coast of the Mediterranean ! Everywhere the fleet called, there was the full, rich beauty of the magical South.

And yet Aloysius longed to see the shore of Italy. He had good reason. His father had let him understand in Madrid, had hinted and half suggested that he would be prepared to discuss the vocation-question in Italy, if meanwhile Aloysius remained silent and agreed to wait.

The sea-voyage, the landing in Genoa, the journey through Italy, all that claimed very little of Aloysius' attention. He was longing to be home. And when finally the old castle arose out of the dusk of evening before the eyes of the returning travellers, the sight made no one's heart beat faster than Aloysius'. He felt himself already half-way to his desires. A few days more, and then he would hasten away to his new home. . . .

Days passed, and no word of the hoped-for permission came. Instead the father sent for the boy, and gave him a very different commission. He informed him, that he desired Aloysius and Rodolfo in his name to call upon the neighbouring princes, and pay them the visit of ceremony which courtesy prescribed after so long a period of absence.

Aloysius saw at once what that meant, and what the father's real intentions were. However, he kept silence, and equipped himself to carry out his charge. He knew himself strong enough to prevent this journey of delay from becoming a journey of temptation.

And so with a large following he started on his tour, first to Mantua, then to Ferrara, Parma, Turin; not to speak of all the smaller visits paid on the stretches between the great cities. They were weeks which from every point of view made heavy demands on the powers of the sixteen-year-old boy. Receptions, dinners, presentations, court balls, followed each other in uninterrupted series. And at them all Aloysius had at least to appear, even though (as was obvious in his circumstances) he felt compelled to refuse all invitations to dance, and limited his dealings with ladies to what was strictly necessary. He felt keenly the difficulties of his position. Nobody, remember, knew of his plans. How easily unfounded hopes might be built upon this journey of the young

heir to Castiglione! And how easily, on the other hand, a misunderstood aloofness might give offence! To observe all reasonable requirements of courtesy and good manners, while at the same time preserving his own principles intact; to keep invariably a clear head amidst this ceaseless whirlpool of pleasure; and as well, to look after the comfort of all his large retinue; that was a task which needed the whole intellectual balance and moral power of a mature character. For he wished to satisfy perfectly, not only his father, but Almighty God!

Well, Aloysius had learnt in Madrid.

The inner power which the day's distractions dissipated and consumed was renewed again in hours of silent, nightly prayer. And when he knelt before his crucifix, or before the simple cross which he drew himself with a few strokes on a sheet of paper, the glory of the world lost itself in the distances of eternity, and its glitter vanished in the gentle glow which shone from the cross into his soul.

Aloysius remained strong and pure.

As he left home, so he returned—though meanwhile a year had passed since the day of his vocation. As regards resigning his heredity he was as determined as before. . . .

The father was not long in realizing this; and he tried new methods of attack. There began for Aloysius a period of almost uninterrupted

skirmishing with counsellors of all kinds, whom the father invited to test his son's vocation, and if possible to make him waver. Everyone from whose influence the father saw the smallest prospect of success was asked for his services. The inner circle of relatives and acquaintances, distinguished and even very distinguished ecclesiastical dignitaries, old and trusted friends of the young prince, all brought the full weight of their arguments to bear. But all alike experienced how clearly and comprehensively their young adversary had thought the matter out for himself, and how effortlessly and unerringly he returned to every argument an unanswerable "But," and to every difficulty a practicable solution. One after another, under the impression created by his victorious defence, they deserted from the ranks of the "tempters," and became advocates for Aloysius' cause.

The margrave, however, was still very far indeed from hanging up his sword. On the contrary. He made one more trial of the ordeal by storm.

One day—he was bedridden because of his gouty foot—he sent for Aloysius. The boy came quickly. He may well have hoped this time at least for good news. One glance at his father's face taught him his error. Roughly and shortly came the question, what did he (Aloysius) now think about his plan? The calm, determined

answer was that he thought exactly the same as before. He wanted to enter the Society of Jesus, and the sooner the better. He asked, therefore, again for his father's consent.

His words were like the lightning-flash which looses a tornado from an oppressive calm. With no less suddenness there broke about his ears a hurricane which exceeded in violence even the storm of the previous year. The sickness, the fresh disappointments, his suppressed ill-temper at his son's obstinacy, and, not least of all, his real love for the boy swelled the father's anger to the extreme limits of passion. His words poured out hard and threatening. A last "Clear out, and never let me see you again!" was Aloysius' signal of dismissal.

He went, and—actually did "clear out."

He probably thought seriously that it would be better for all concerned if he went away and appeared again as little as possible. So he got his valet to pack his few possessions together, and went with him out of the big gateway, down the hill-side, and out to the summer residence of the castle, a villa which lay about half-an-hour's journey outside the town. There he was alone in his struggle for his great ideal.

After some days the margrave asked where Aloysius was. The answer brought at once the indignant order, that he should return immediately to the castle. Still more ungracious was his

reception. Angrily the father asked his eldest son if this impertinent and presumptuous conduct were his idea of due reverence and obedience. Aloysius replied quietly that he had taken in good faith what the father had said, and believed that he wished him out of the house. In order to avoid disturbing the peace of the household he had gone. The answer loosed a new storm of reproach and threats. Then he was banished to his room.

But the sick man was not easy in his mind. His anger dwindled and vanished. If the truth be told, the cause of the whole quarrel was, really, wounded father's love and father's pride; and now from the same source arose a secret anxiety lest the child who was so dear to him might perhaps in desperation do himself an injury after such evil handling. His conscience gave him no rest. So he asked the captain of the castle troops, who happened to come in, to go over and see what Aloysius was doing. The latter went; and learned from the chamberman in Aloysius' outer room that the young lord had locked the doors, and refused to see any visitors.

With an answer of that kind the captain, obviously, could not return to the father. He wanted to be quite certain that Aloysius was all right. So he crept softly up to the door, discovered a crack, widened it noiselessly with his hunting-knife, and—was struck still as a statue by

a picture which he had not in the least expected. Aloysius was on his knees before his crucifix, praying with fervent ejaculations to the Lord on the Cross, while a sharp discipline, wielded mercilessly, raised dark weals on his bared shoulders.

The messenger had seen enough. Shaken and deeply touched he returned to the father.

"If your Highness had but seen what I have seen—in very truth you would let your child depart this day." Tears stood in the honest soldier's eyes. Uneasily the count asked what then had happened to cause the tears. "Your Highness, what I saw would bring any man to weep."

Then he gave his account.

The margrave was speechless. What he heard seemed to him like a dream. He could not believe it without the evidence of his own senses. The chamberman, accordingly, was ordered to report at once the next time Aloysius locked himself into his room.

That happened on the very next day. The count got himself carried on a litter to the door. He looked through the crack, and saw with his own eyes the picture of the previous day—his child in wounds—in a lonely, bitter struggle, whose one object ultimately was, to win for him, the father, strength to make the painful sacrifice of renunciation.

Breathless moments of gazing passed.

Then the count dragged himself painfully without a word to his litter. What he had seen had gripped his heart this time too powerfully. He sent for the mother, had himself announced by the valet de chambre, and asked to be admitted in a few moments.

Aloysius received his parents. All traces had disappeared, save one, which spoke silently but very movingly—the drops which sprinkled the floor: blood and tears.

The father was moved anew to his very depths. Aloysius saw that, though he had no idea of the reason. The fact itself, however, was sufficient to make him once more, in presence of his mother, beg his father earnestly to let him go.

The unexpected happened. The margrave gave his consent. His will had yielded before the incredible determination and clean-handed purity with which the son had fought the fight for his ideals.

A letter from the count's hand hastened to Rome to inform the General of the Society of Jesus that he was prepared to give his eldest son to the Society; "the embodiment of his greatest hopes, the dearest thing he had on earth."

And so this second stage of the battle for the vocation ended with Aloysius victorious.

He had proved himself "a good soldier of Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. ii. 3.)

His determination in pursuit of his ideal was stronger than the fascinations and attractions of the courts, stronger than the reasoning of prudent counsellors, and stronger than his father's anger and threats.

But was it also stronger than fretting time and wearying disappointments ? Aloysius did not rejoice too soon. He may have surmised that his father's renunciation was more a momentary swelling of compassion and emotion than a real, inner act of sacrifice.

At all events, the future was to show whether Aloysius had also learned that last and finest lesson : how to persevere.

THE FIGHT RENEWED

NOW began the time of negotiations. Aloysius had already been invested by Emperor Rudolf II with the imperial fief of the margravate of Castiglione. This investiture had now to be recalled; and everything concerning resignation and succession had to be arranged in all its details. Lawyers had to consult about the matter, the senate of Milan had to give its opinion, the Emperor had to ratify the decisions; and in order to attain this last, influential relatives had to be petitioned for their support. All this lasted weeks, which to Aloysius seemed an eternity.

And in the midst of it all a new delay occurred. It was absolutely necessary that the margrave should go to Milan. Important business called for his presence. His gout, however, from which he suffered continually, did not permit the journey. Aloysius, accordingly, was again commissioned to go and undertake the troublesome negotiations. He obeyed and went. The proceedings were of a very complicated and protracted character. Aloysius carried them out, it is true, to his father's complete satisfaction; but he sacrificed thereby the whole winter, the

following spring, and the early summer of 1585. He knew that the permission for his abdication had arrived from the emperor; and he awaited with longing the day when his father would summon him back to Castiglione, and give him his freedom.

How great then, was his astonishment, when, instead of that, the margrave arrived unexpectedly in Milan, and without any roundabout digressions, put him afresh the old question: whether he still meant to persevere in his decision, or had meanwhile become of another mind?

The answer was the same as from the first day it had always been.

In an instant the battle had broken out anew. No longer thunderous and violent as of old; yet perhaps, for all that, even more dangerous and critical. The father spoke to all appearances with perfect calm, but with an impressive earnestness which he had never used before. This time his eloquence sprang from the mighty power of love controlled, from love to his child, to his country and to his race.

He spoke quite frankly to Aloysius of his anxiety concerning Rodolfo, his heir, whose impetuous and violent character made him fear very much for his regency. He spoke of the hopes which he had founded upon his eldest son, of his ability and character, of his talent for administration and government. He reminded

him of the trust and affection with which his subjects already regarded him; of the influence which he had already acquired in the courts of so many noble houses; of the support which he could be to his family and to many others besides.

He ended with an appeal to the heart of his child; he, who was usually so rough and stern! "You can see for yourself that I am ill and can hardly move. I do need someone to take over from me the reins of government. You could do that to-day. But if you become a religious, I must bear alone the whole burden. I cannot last long, but must soon break down under the strain; and, dying, will accuse you of a share in the responsibility for your father's death." Tears choked his voice; love and grief had overpowered him.

Aloysius stood deeply moved before Don Ferrante. His father had never spoken like that before. The language of sorrow, which spoke so sincerely in his father's trembling tones, gripped him to the heart; and he respected his father's pain. For a long time he stood in silence, looking into his father's eyes. These two knew from of old what they were to each other. That was, from a human point of view, the tragedy of this struggle: it was a battle between two hearts which loved each other with no ordinary love. The son loved and revered his father with a true

child's love; for the father's weaknesses were, despite all, of very small account in Aloysius' eyes in comparison with his manly virtues. And the father clung to his best child with a kind of unbounded confidence, mingled with respect and swelling pride in his eldest son.

And now once more Aloysius had to refuse; to reject his father's pleading!

He thanked his sire for all the fatherly love and affection which echoed in his words; and admitted that, were his plan conceived through merely human motives, the weight of his father's arguments would compel him to unconditional assent. But he was guided (he explained again) by the dictates of a higher Will. God called him unmistakably and beyond all question to His service; and when God called, all human voices must be silent. He told his father in all earnestness that he appreciated to the full the value of his reasons, which he had discussed and debated with himself so often and so long; but it was his firm conviction that God would not leave his father's sacrifice unrewarded, and would in His own good way and time twist and turn out everything for the best.

Even yet the margrave could not realize that Aloysius wanted to go away from him. He got into communication with Fr. Gagliardi, the Rector of the Jesuit Professed House in Milan, and requested him to subject his son's vocation once

more in his own presence to a searching examination.

The interview took place. It was the first and the last trial in which the ground beneath Aloysius' feet seemed to tremble and become insecure. The Father put forward one plea after the other, with a keenness, a plausibility, above all, with a air of complete conviction, such as none of his previous adversaries had succeeded in assuming. In particular, he contrived so to magnify the difficulties concerning the entering of the Society of Jesus, that Aloysius, as he later admitted, had to bring actually his last ounce of spiritual energy into play in order to withstand this flank-attack.

It was no small relief when, after a trial lasting a full hour, his opponent dropped the rôle of tempter, and full of honest admiration for the readiness of his answers and the certainty of his defence, confirmed his vocation as undoubtedly genuine.

Even the father was struck, as he saw his son return to every insidious question a clear and apt reply. It was quite obviously more than a mere form of words, when Aloysius claimed to have considered the matter long and thoroughly. Indeed, when Aloysius had departed, the count admitted in conversation to Fr. Gagliardi that he saw now clearly that the vocation was from God. He went on to tell with pardonable father's pride of the life of his eldest boy since childhood and,

still under the influence of the moment, ended with the statement that now at last he would permit Aloysius to join the order. . . .

Still another big battle, therefore, had ended in triumph for Aloysius. But into this last conflict a new element had entered. Here for the first time the deepest and most hidden driving forces became apparent; those ultimate springs of action which directed on the one side the son's resistance, on the other the father's attack.

It was no longer a struggle of one stubborn will against another; a battle between a father's tyranny and the craving for liberty of an ardent child. It was a war between two worlds of values and ideals which, though both possible, yet could not both be realized together.

The father wished his son to seek his way to God by toiling for the earthly goods which await the striver here below. These goods seemed to him great enough and important enough to satisfy a full, rich life. But—" when God's unending glory and sweetness pour into the soul . . . then whatever on earth seemed valuable grows dim; earth's goodness and value and worth become as dross."

That was what had happened to Aloysius; and his father knew it not. During the years of his early inner ripening the boy had grown up above the world of earthly values, up into the world of God and His unending, sovereign worth. That

was the reason why to all the apparently so weighty arguments of his father his answer was (and could only be) ever the same: "God has called me, and I must follow."

The truth was, that even still the father had not really grasped the power of this call. Grace, which was living and active in his son's heart, had not yet gripped him decisively. The claims of God requiring the complete resignation of his first-born were still far less real and tangible to him than his own clear claims upon his beloved child.

As a result, there was nothing else for it but a painful and stubborn prolongation of the struggle, until the father's eyes were opened, and he, too, realized that God is the last and highest ideal of human life, and its only essential good.

Then at last man's voice was hushed in presence of God's call.

THE DECISION . . .

THE day of his vocation, the Feast of the Assumption, was again drawing near, when Aloysius after many long months returned to his father's castle. Almost two years lay behind him now since that call had come to him before the miraculous picture of Our Lady in Madrid. Years of struggle and constant disappointments.

A little while before, Aloysius had written from Mantua to Fr. Acquaviva, the General of the Society of Jesus, enquiring whether, in case his father continued to resist, he might not leave home without his permission, and " somewhere or other on God's earth " enter the order. After all, everybody knew now that his vocation came from God, and would understand his action.

The answer came. It was that, despite all difficulties, he should try to obtain his father's permission and leave his parents' house in peace.

So he held on, and waited for a while to see whether his father of his own accord would not speak the word of dismissal.

In vain. His father seemed to have forgotten all that had gone before. He wrapped himself in impenetrable silence.

What was Aloysius to do?

It is related that Aloysius about this time devoted himself with special tenderness to his younger brothers, gave up hours of his time to them, played with them and taught them. Was he perhaps trying the innocent diplomacy of love, hoping in this way to smooth the way to his father's heart? Or was it rather that he himself was firmly convinced that the time was not far distant now, when he must bid good-bye to them for ever?

Little Didaco was the youngest of all, only three years old. Then came Christierno, who was just learning to read and write. The last was Francesco, of whom Aloysius always thought the most highly and who was now, owing to the death of two brothers, the next after Rodolfo, the second eldest. Rodolfo, a year younger than Aloysius, went his own course. But the three youngest were enthusiastic about their big brother who was so fond of them, and so kind and considerate. He had a drawer in his room which was for the little band the essence of all things worth striving for! It was filled with dainties and tiny toys which Aloysius collected specially for the little ones. Whoever was good was permitted occasionally to reach his hand into this enchanted kingdom, and keep his capture as a reward of virtue. Small wonder, then, that Aloysius after his long absence soon took these young hearts by storm.

The father, however, did not notice anything. It was only the mother whose eyes nothing of all this escaped. She it was, too, who observed with growing dismay that her Luigi was getting thinner and thinner. Moreover, with motherly sagacity she suspected only too accurately the reason. He was using—mercilessly—the only weapons which remained to him, prayer and painful, voluntary penance, in order to gain the grace of perseverance and to wrest the victory from heaven. He kept silence and suffered ; and his mother suffered with him.

She did indeed go to the father, and with a mother's prudence tried to influence him. It would be much better surely, she pointed out, to let Aloysius go, for then at any rate he would remain alive. As a religious his health would be constantly and effectively looked after by his superiors, whereas at home, at the present rate, he would soon wear himself away into the grave.

The father was dumb.

Once more days of fruitless perseverance passed. Then the mother had to go away on a journey, and Aloysius was left alone with his father.

It seemed to him that at last the time for decisive action had come. He himself led the conversation round to the previously given permission, and asked his father's leave to put his plans in execution at once.

The margrave flared up immediately. When did he ever give his consent? He would certainly never give it before Aloysius had thought the matter over fully and carefully. In his present state of health he was obviously unfitted to persevere in religious life. He could not count on his father's consent before his twenty-fifth year. If he were absolutely determined to go, well, let him go. But if he did so, then he was no child of Don Ferrante. He would disown such a son.

Aloysius stood there thunderstruck. Could his father really have forgotten all that he had promised him less than a year before?

He begged and prayed. In vain; the margrave persisted in his refusal. Indeed, he went further. Don Ferrante realized that in the General's answer recommending patience he had a powerful weapon in his hand, and he pressed Aloysius with all the urgency that he could command to consent to the whole question being shelved until he reached the age of twenty-five.

Aloysius at first wanted to consult the General in Rome. This, however, the father's impatience made impossible. He must decide on the spot, or else depart amidst dissension. So the sorely tried boy, abandoned by all human aid, consented under the pressure of circumstances to the utmost which his conscience allowed him. He agreed to accept the postponement, if his father would

observe two conditions. First, Don Ferrante must allow him to study in Rome, in order that his vocation itself might be placed out of danger; and, secondly, he must now at once send to the General in writing his consent to his son's departure when the allotted time had expired.

For two full days Don Ferrante resisted all talk of conditions; then reluctantly he consented, provisionally at least, to the first. But after days of negotiation with the competent persons in Rome, it became apparent that this first condition was impracticable. The whole affair was by this time in such a state of entanglement that no one saw any hope of a solution, least of all Aloysius himself. The need was never so great as now....

And God's help never so near! Now God Himself intervened.

A few days after these last disappointments, Aloysius was kneeling alone in his room, with more than four hours of white-hot, heaven-storming prayer behind him. Suddenly, in an instant, there came over him a sense of power, an inner clearness of vision so great that he could not fail to recognize that it came from God. He did not know yet what he was to say; but he arose and went—to his father.

The margrave, who was again suffering from an attack of his old complaint, lay in bed. Aloysius had himself announced. In a few moments he stood before his father, his eyes glowing with

an interior exaltation. And his voice rang through the room, indescribably steady and determined, yet atremble with deepest emotion:

"Father, I am in your power. You can do with me as you will. But . . .", and the care-worn young face took on something of the grandeur of a prophet, "but know that God is calling me to the Society of Jesus, and that you are resisting God if you resist my vocation."

That was all. Aloysius departed, and his father remained alone. Alone with God and with the words of his son, which like a ray of clear, holy light had pierced into the most secret depths of his soul.

Grace began its work.

As if awakened from a deep dream, the father found himself with startling suddenness face to face with the full reality and truth. A breath from the kingdom of eternity had sufficed to scatter to the winds his whole laboriously constructed house of cards. God stretched forth His hand over this heart and gripped it, not mercilessly, but with a terrifying strength.

The rough man groaned aloud again and again in the excess of his interior struggle, as if smitten with a grievous wound. A retainer came in to see how he was. The margrave turned away from him towards the wall to hide the tears which he could no longer master.

The young brothers came, summoned by the

servant, and stood around the couch perplexed, half frightened, half in sympathy. No one knew what had suddenly come over the sick man, except that it must be some exquisite pain. That much was apparent from the sobs and trembling which shook so violently the strong man's frame.

Finally, after long minutes of alarming silence, the clouds of mystery began to clear.

"Call me Aloysius!" The margrave, keeping control of himself with difficulty, turned to his children.

Aloysius came, pale and earnest, with the consciousness that now all must be decided.

His father's eyes rested upon him. His lips trembled as they sought for words. Then, slowly, jerkily, in deep tones he spoke:

"My child, what have you done to me? I loved you, and love you still, for you deserve it. You were my pride and my hope. . . . And now you say that God is calling you elsewhere . . . and . . . I will hold you back no longer. You are free . . . go where you will. And be happy, that is my prayer for you!"

The last dams were swept away by the inner storm, and the grief which could be restrained no longer broke out in stubborn, tireless tears. The little brothers gaped in awe now at their father, now at their brother. A scene such as this they had never witnessed before. Aloysius quietly motioned to them to withdraw. He himself

could hardly speak for emotion; a word of thanks, a word of comfort, and he too went out. . . .

And then the realization came over him with its full power, with blissful certainty: he was free!

The whole overwhelming strain of the last years was lifted from him at one blow. He was *free*. He could realize nothing more.

How he returned to his room, how long he knelt there . . . he did not know. He could only give thanks, and thanks, and again thanks for God's wonderful Providence, which had brought the seemingly impossible to pass.

The decisive battle was won. As conqueror he stood on free ground, his eye turned afresh towards his ideal. Exactly two years after his first calling, on August 15th, 1585, he was able to send the joyful tidings to the General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. The great struggle was ended; a struggle which, in its duration, in its keenness, in its disappointments and sacrifices is probably without compare.

And Aloysius had fought it out to the end without reproach, with arms unstained. That was his greatest and his most lasting triumph.

That he fought with such a knightly daring, with such a loyalty and cleanness; for that Aloysius has won the thanks of a thousand youthful hearts. For in every age, when a holy purpose

has to fight its way in the teeth of traditional opinions and tendencies, Aloysius' battle blazes out anew.

To end the struggle by a single act of unlawful violence would often be no difficult matter for these young warriors. Aloysius, too, showed more than once that he could have done the like.

But God showed him something far finer : how strength of soul in union with grace can free the spirit, and swing it upwards to new thoughts and loftier aspirations.

And that was the final solution which far outweighed all the sacrifices of the conflict.

Aloysius had hardly begun his religious life, when his father died. The last days of his life proved that in him, too, the spirit of the son had taken root and grown strong. On his death-bed he admitted with tears that he owed to Aloysius the great change of his life and his peaceful dying hours.

It was the last, the culminating triumph of Aloysius' battle for his vocation. He had pledged his life to God, and fought for the right to fulfil his promise ; and by his fighting had gained also his father's soul.

It was the Lord's own prophecy : " In your patience you shall possess your souls." (Luke xxi. 19.)

GOOD-BYE

IT was November 2nd, 1585.

At Mantua, in the palace of San Sebastiano, a select company had come together. They were the heads of the many-branched family of Gonzaga, Aloysius' nearest relatives. They were come to be witnesses of an act which was without precedent in the history of their race.

The day of the young heir's resignation had arrived.

Even on the very last morning Aloysius had to give to many of the noble lords renewed explanations and solemn assurances that he was in earnest. They simply could not understand how anyone could give up such a fine inheritance and such a brilliant future for life in a monastery. Aloysius remained calm and self-possessed. The victory had been won ; and the small skirmishes covering the retreat could make no difference now to his triumph.

In the lofty hall of the castle the noble gathering assembled at the appointed hour. They formed a picture of courtly pomp, of princely splendour.

The long document, in which the renunciation was determined in all its details, was read aloud.

The nobles were very solemn; Don Ferrante was moved to tears. One alone was radiant with joy and happiness—Aloysius himself. He felt no sense of renunciation; he felt only as if one earthly fetter after the other were being struck from his limbs. Land and coronet, fief and title, goods and inheritance, all fell away. Golden fetters they were; but fetters, nevertheless, which till then had crippled his striving for the boundless liberty of God. He was poor, even miserably poor; for one clause of the document extended his resignation to embrace even the yearly income, the prospect of which the father had previously held out to his son. Difficulties of the moment made it impossible for the margrave to fulfil his former promise; and so the sum was struck off. In Aloysius' heart was jubilee. Had not the Master, too, walked poor through life? Even in this he was now privileged to resemble him.

The notary ceased. The deed of resignation had been promulgated in all form.

Then Aloysius stepped firmly and unhesitatingly to the table. A last glance over the paper, and with steady hand he penned his name at the foot. His resignation was complete.

His brother Rodolfo signed after him. With a stroke of a pen he had received all that the elder brother had cast aside: fief, lands, and goods.

And now the two brothers stood together, facing one another. Aloysius looked smilingly

into Rodolfo's eyes. "Well, Rodolfo, which of us two is now the happier? You or I? I have no doubt myself."

There the whole spirit of the hour was pent in a single phrase. A phrase that sprang from a full heart; a heart not heavy and weary, but leaping forward with the light, quick step of joy.

Aloysius returned to his room and spent over an hour in prayer, thanking the Lord that He had granted him to live that moment.

Meanwhile the morning had run on to midday. The distinguished lords who had been present at the act of renunciation sat down to dinner. All were present, save him who was the object of conversation and the centre of all thoughts—Aloysius.

Word was sent to him that the meal was served. A few minutes later the doors of the great hall were pushed aside, and Aloysius entered—in the plain, black cassock of a scholastic of the Society of Jesus.

A thrill of something more than transient surprise ran through the guests. They felt one and all that here the cassock was no mere outward garb. It was the expression of a boy's innermost heart and will, which now for the first time could be given full and definite publicity.

And there, amidst the play of contrasts, the mystery surrounding this life became to those present somewhat more tangible. There sat

amongst them one of their own race, noble as any Gonzaga who ever lived, yet become even already as one who had never belonged to them. "Without father, without mother, without genealogy," as the Scripture says of the mysterious priest-king of Salem (Heb. vii. 3), he had been raised aloft by the call of God above the bonds of flesh and blood into a kingdom where the invisible, the inner values alone have worth.

That was why he was so grand and so impressive in his resignation of all that he could *have*. These things were nothing in comparison with what, through God's grace and his own loyalty, he *had become*. Strong, sure of himself, and confident of his course, with honest joy shining in bright eyes and tingling in happy voice; that was the picture of the youth—he was barely eighteen—which his relatives bore away with them in memory. They never forgot that last meeting with Aloysius. The words he spoke at table, such simple words about "one thing necessary," remained printed in their hearts like a testament. For from his lips the old sayings about serving God and making certain of salvation sounded, not as theory, but as the very substance of life and action.

And in that hour of parting there came perhaps to many a one the faint realization of what it means, when the "new man" is born in a human

heart, that " new man " from a higher kingdom, in whom homesickness for the heights is an undying flame.

Of the " new man " whom he had put on, Aloysius wrote that same day to the General of the Society in Rome ; and of the new life towards which his longings soared. Like a beacon on a hillside at night, there stood before him the words in which Peter Ribedaneira, one of Ignatius' first companions, summed up pithily the whole aim and striving of Loyola's band :

" Men crucified to the world and to whom the world is crucified : that is the achievement which our life demands from us. New men, who have put off their own wishes and inclinations that they might put on Christ ; who have died to themselves that they might live to justice ; ' who,' as St. Paul says, ' in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth . . . show themselves as ministers of God ; and by the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report,' in a word, in all prosperity and adversity go forward themselves with giant strides towards their heavenly fatherland, and sweep others also with them by every means and in every way they can, keeping before their eyes always God's greater glory."

Now Aloysius saw his path to heaven clear. And now he meant to "forget the things that lay behind," and reach forward only for the things sunk beyond his range of vision. A new world, a "new life" lay before him.

NEW IDEALS

ON November 25th, the feast of St. Catherine, a small party ascended the Quirinal in the Eternal City. And at their head, with hardly controlled longing in his eager stride, Aloysius.

Their goal was the church of the novitiate.

Scipione Gonzaga, Prince of the German Empire and Patriarch of Jerusalem celebrated Mass and gave Aloysius Holy Communion.

Then came the moment of parting. The four or five retainers who had followed their young lord to the door of the novitiate were given hastily last messages, greetings, and thanks for all at home. A last good-bye, and Aloysius crossed the threshold of Sant' Andrea, the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Rome.

His welcome was simple and hearty.

When Aloysius saw the little room which was assigned to him for the first few days—it had no ornament other than its poorness, and no recommendation other than its quiet—he was deeply moved. He felt as if at that moment the dearest wish of his heart had been fulfilled. A sentence from the Psalms sprang almost of its own accord to his lips: "*Hæc requies mea.* . . . This is my

resting-place for ever and ever : here will I dwell, for I have chosen it." (Ps. cxxxi. 14.)

He had found what he had sought so ardently —the home of his soul.

And in that hour a holy purpose burned strong within his spirit, thrilling through him, filling him with the power of a hero who " hath rejoiced as a giant to run his course." (Ps. xviii. 6.) Freedom for God, full freedom for all things that are the Lord's—this he had attained. It behoved him now to make full use of this freedom for God.

" The man who takes up anything, whether a career or a business, must give of his very best, if he would accomplish anything worth while." It was a saying which he had often heard from his father's lips. Well, he was going to put it into action now, as likewise that other phrase, the motto of the De Tana, his mother's family : " *De Bono in Melius*—From Good to Better ! "

Good his life had always been. In humility and thankfulness for God's guidance and providence over him, he could admit that to himself. Like the rich young man in the Gospels, he could say to his Master without a lie : " All these have I kept from my youth." (St. Matt. xix. 20.)

But there had swept over him that urgent longing which revealed itself also in the young man's tones, that insistent question, " What yet is wanting to me ? " which springs from the

depths of pure hearts, and shoots upward far above all the things of precept up into the heavenly kingdom of love. It is the product of that inward certainty that God has left free a whole world of actions, extending far beyond the bounds of mere obedience ; a world which is to be conquered only by the *élan* of ever-youthful, enthusiastic love.

And then those words had sounded in his ears —as long ago " beyond the Jordan "—clear as drops of light, restrained yet powerfully sueing : " If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give it to the poor . . . and come follow Me ! "

" If thou wilt . . . " : it was the appeal of Jesus to the generosity of the youthful heart. There was no compulsion, only " a look of love." (St. Mark x. 21.) But the one unnamed person in the Gospels " went away sorrowing." The things he had were more to him than those which " were yet wanting." " For he had great possessions." He preferred to throw away the discipleship of the Son of God rather than lose his gold.

" If thou wilt . . . " : the words found a very different hearing in Aloysius' heart. He went quickly and gave away everything, and came back to serve his Lord.

To follow the Master close at hand, with no divided heart, with no reserve : that was the oath which the young knight of God made within

himself, for every day that was to follow that first day in religion.

And with all the loyalty that was his, he kept his oath. The energy with which he threw himself into all the demands of religious life was more than the proverbial zeal of the beginner. It was the love of a man travelling towards the consummation of his dreams. Now, love is like fire; it never says "Enough!" It neither rests nor sleeps, until the whole heart is aglow with holy flame.

Five years of religious life still lay before Aloysius. They were the summer of this early-perfect life; the time of rich, golden maturity. Summertime, the time of ripeness, is a time of quiet. No longer the changing beauty of the spring, when a thousand blossoms are crying for full development. March winds are hushed, and silently beneath the sun's warm rays the seed ripens towards the harvest.

Aloysius' life now became strangely still. It was approaching its last maturity.

THE RULE

WITH his entry into religious life Aloysius first came in contact with that mistress of monasteries, the Rule, with all its tiny prescripts regulating every detail of a monk's conduct.

What did the Rule mean, then and later, to Aloysius ?

A Rule means a standard, a measure of common conduct, a necessity for adaptation. And Aloysius up till now had been in all his interior growth such an independent soul. Untrammelled in his prayer, uncontrolled in his penances, unrestricted in his use of time, free in his very act of resignation.

And now all this wealth of spiritual growth, this mass of spiritual foliage was to be clipped and ordered to the measure of a Rule. Would not the very best and most precious things in his character and conduct (his independence, for instance) fall victims to the hindering dictates of uniformity ?

It was a fear that had never for a moment crossed Aloysius' mind. On the contrary, as if an inner voice were telling him that something, and that the finest touch of all, was still wanting

to his deeds, he had long sought for the hand to which he could with peaceful certainty entrust the direction of his development. Now that he found in his novice-master, Fr. Pescatore, an experienced guide of souls, he handed himself over unreservedly to his guidance and, without a thought of any danger to his own personality, let the master mould him as he wished according to the Rule's requirements.

It was not merely the vague desire of guidance, which lies in every unspoilt young heart, that make obedience easy to Aloysius. His keen mind, accustomed to probe things to their depths and analyse them into their prime components, had not taken long to grasp the principles on which the obedience of the religious depends. God, the highest and holiest Will, had become the goal and standard of all his doings and strivings. But God's will was manifested to him in the Rule and in the commands of his superiors : this was a thought which nature and revelation alike combined to bring home to him with perfect clearness. God guides men through men ; it is the fundamental law of divine Providence. Aloysius knew it well. Had not his Master, the Son of God, lived so before him ? Even Jesus had let himself be ruled by men, thirty long years in quiet Nazareth. He had " fulfilled the law " His whole life long ; and at the end He had bowed Himself beneath the hands of His executioners,

and " become obedient unto death, even unto the death of the Cross."

Convinced of the redeeming power of obedience, Aloysius followed the tracks of Christ. His strong faith waited for no extraordinary manifestations of the divine Will. " Blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed." He obeyed those placed over him, from the Rector even to the humblest lay-brother; ay, as he often said himself, he obeyed the lay-brother by preference and most exactly. For—this was the reason he gave—in obeying superiors of this kind, it appeared most clearly that his obedience was paid, not to men and to mere natural good qualities, but to God alone Who revealed His will in the person (humanly speaking so unimportant) of him who gave the command.

It was through the force of this conviction that Aloysius obeyed " blindly." That is to say, that in his obedience human considerations had no weight. He obeyed God—and that even in the smallest details. For that was another of his characteristics: the certainty with which he could apply his principles to particular cases. Of this we have many instances. Once, for example, his uncle, Cardinal della Rovere, met him by chance in the sacristy of the Gesù, and began to speak a few words with him. Aloysius, however, with a deep bow, explained that he had no permission to speak with him there. It was a

little thing, surely—to many it might seem even petty—but the Cardinal did not consider it exaggerated scrupulosity. He went to Fr. General, expressed his admiration for this conscientiousness, asked for leave to speak with Aloysius, and on returning found his young nephew now perfectly ready to engage in conversation.

Another time—it was during Holy Week—the brother sacristan sent him into the church, and told him to look after the lights on the altar of repose. Later on he was asked how he liked the altar of repose. His answer was, that he did not know, as he had not seen it; he had only looked after the lamps (kneeling at the side or remaining behind the altar, presumably?), as he had been told to do!

Incidents like this may seem extravagant; in Aloysius they certainly were nothing of the kind. He was like an architect who builds a great cathedral pure in style from the arch of the side door-way to the climbing tendrils round the dome. He was not narrow minded, but simply took a pride and pleasure in his building. That is why he was so radiant when told to help in the kitchen, or clean the lamps along the corridors. "Now he has what he wants," the others used to say, "and so he is in good humour." It would have been more accurate to say: "Now he is doing God's will, and he knows it; that is what makes him so happy and joyful."

Freedom brings happiness. And Aloysius through the power of the Rule had freed himself for God from all the narrowness of self. For a Rule is, after all, more than a mere outward standard. He who receives it with readiness receives in his own heart the spirit which God has hidden in the outward forms. Aloysius fulfilled the Rule, and the Rule led him to his own complete fulfilment. Both, in the truest sense of "fullness" and "fulfilment."

Obedience, therefore, became for Aloysius a spring of blessings, just as the obedience of Christ has become a fount of benediction for all mankind. Triumphantly St. Paul, after dwelling upon all the stages of humiliation through which the Son of Man descended in obedience to His Father, sweeps his glance in one great, soaring flight from the cross of shame, from the deepest degradation up to the heights of heaven. "For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."

A reflection of this His glory Christ has promised to all those who, like Him, become servants of God. Aloysius by his ready obedience deserved that in him too the promise should be fulfilled.

WORK SANCTIFIED

THE first year of the noviceship was running towards its close. Even before its end Aloysius was given an order to move over to Naples and there begin his studies again. It was hoped that the change of dwelling and occupation would strengthen his always rather uncertain health. It soon became apparent, however, that the climate of Naples did not suit him; and so after six months, in May, 1587, he was summoned back again to Rome to complete the school year there.

Aloysius was a quick, accurate, and thorough student; that was well known. None the less, he was immensely astonished, when one day the rumour went round that his professors had elected him this year for the big disputation which every year concluded the lectures in philosophy. He had to defend the whole range of scholastic philosophy before a large public gathering; his task was to explain and prove the various propositions of the system, and to maintain them against the attacks of a series of well-prepared adversaries.

Aloysius had no fear of the labour and exertion

which all this entailed. What he disliked was the thought of "shining" in such a distinguished position before the public. Even the very fact that the disputation was entrusted to him was a proof of his teachers' exceptional confidence in his abilities. It was not yet a full year since he had resumed his studies; and, moreover, this one year had been for him nothing but a sequence of more or less troublesome bodily sufferings. Now a range of matter was handed over to him which is usually considered sufficient material for three years of study. Of course, he had learned some philosophy before his entrance into the Society of Jesus; but that was now more or less ancient history. It was, therefore, no small performance which was expected of him. And precisely on this account, the recognition which would be paid him, if he succeeded, was for him an uncomfortable prospect.

He even went so far as to ask one of his masters, in whom he had special confidence, whether it would not be permissible for him to do something clumsy on purpose, in order to disappoint a little the expectations which had been placed upon him. His counsellor dissuaded him strongly from this idea; and Aloysius accordingly promised to do his best and to try to satisfy his teachers.

It was not so easy for him to keep his promise. For on this occasion, through a series of accidental

circumstances, the disputation seemed likely to become quite an event. Owing to the great number of guests, it was to be held in the largest hall in the house; moreover, three cardinals had announced their intention of being present, Cardinal Mondovi, Cardinal Scipione Gonzaga, and Cardinal della Rovere, the last two relatives of Aloysius on his father's and mother's side respectively.

Aloysius found himself, then, on the day of the disputation the centre once more of a brilliant and noble gathering; he to whom all this pomp and splendour was so repellent.

And one of the young doctors in philosophy who were opposing him even went to the lengths of prefacing his objections with a few polite words about Aloysius' noble birth, etc., as he judged the laws of oratory and of etiquette required. It may have been good manners; but the audience involuntarily began to pity Aloysius for having to submit to listen. The majority knew, of course, how exquisitely sensitive he was regarding compliments of this kind. And those who did not know already saw plainly written on his countenance how he felt. He was blushing painfully, and his eyes were restlessly wandering from the ground to his opponent and back again, waiting for the first word touching the matter in hand.

The young doctor had to put the best face he

could on it when Aloysius handled him, and him alone, in his responses with very marked curtness, and tore his specious arguments mercilessly to shreds. Otherwise, Aloysius fulfilled his task just as he had been expected to do. The disputation, which lasted several hours, afforded clear proof that even under difficult circumstances he was capable of the highest intellectual efforts and achievements.

The cardinals expressed their astonishment that he had been able to cover such a vast amount of matter in so short a time. But that was nothing new to Aloysius. All his life long he had been accustomed to find himself working under conditions far more prejudicial than favourable to success. If it were not the distractions of the courts, then it was sickness which threatened to hinder his study. If not sickness, then his duties towards his father and towards his family came between him and his work. And yet, in spite of all, he had succeeded in acquiring knowledge and culture far above the ordinary measure of his time. He had learned a whole series of ancient and modern languages; while still quite young, he had studied certain branches of philosophy; and he possessed no mean knowledge of mathematics and the sciences.

Now in religion his talents developed quite perceptibly and, on the speculative side especially, became quite above the common. Among his

teachers he had the reputation of being a keen and independent thinker, on whom they built great hopes for the future. His accurate and reliable memory was famous; for example, he could dictate from memory whole pages of mathematical proofs exactly as he had learned them in childhood. His judgment was cool and balanced, his quest of truth strong and sincere. He had the courage to put difficulties, and sometimes by one of his questions he connected problems or threw upon them a light which was new even to his master.

There can hardly be any doubt that he was uncommonly well equipped with talents. Equally certain, however, is the fact that he made his talents produce abundant interest. The little sentence, "We are working hard at our studies," which he wrote as a child in his letter from Florence to his parents, remained true of him despite all difficulties all his life long. Moreover, he had acquired a terrific power of self-discipline in another sphere—that of prayer—and this faculty of concentration did him excellent service in all his intellectual activities. He was able to apply his attention to any subject at will, and keep it there with an intensity which practically excluded all distractions. And the vigour of his will enabled him simply to ignore his frequent indispositions and the constantly recurring, aye, almost unremitting headaches which tormented him.

The last and deepest element, however, which gave consecration and fertility to his work was the inner life of his soul in God and in eternity. A modern professor of education (Prof. Förster of Munich) has put it well: "If a soul has once clearly recognized her true life, and if she *wants* that life, then she begins to see work in quite a new light, i.e., as a means towards this life. Christianity promises her crown to the man who can conquer himself, and thereby gives a special premium to that work which costs most in self-conquest. Such a man approaches work, not merely with the temporal anxiety which loses itself in temporal things, but with the longing which strives towards the heights. And this will to work, springing from the depths of the soul and directed towards eternal life, is what gives restless, untiring energy."

Aloysius' work was inspired by this energy. Work was for him more than the command of the hour. It was the command of eternity, urgent as in the words of Christ: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me whilst it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

In this spirit Aloysius glorified his life's work and made it precious for eternity.

THE VOWS

TWO years after his entry into the novitiate, on the Feast of St. Catherine, 1587, Aloysius made the holocaust of himself to God by vow. He knelt in the chapel of the Roman college on the steps of the altar. Before him, in the priestly hands of his superior, gleamed the Host beneath whose veils his divine King and Friend looked down on him. And Aloysius spoke the words by which he swore to God and to the Society of Jesus everlasting loyalty in poverty, chastity, and obedience. His shining eye and radiant countenance betrayed the inner happiness which transpired him. For now he had reached the goal towards which for so many years all his longings and labours and dreams had tended: he was bound to God, and free to spend himself for God and for His cause.

With the great heart of youth he laid upon the altar all that he could call his own: possessions and joy of life, rank, and family, his own desires and cravings. All these things, which seem to men so important and so valuable, he quietly resigned, not in fear or hate, but simply because for him they were too small. He had found

better and greater things. In him lived the ambition which was expressed in the saying of his master, St. Ignatius: "To love God and to seek no other reward than to love Him more, that is the only right ambition for immortal beings. The man who has God within him needs nothing more, though he be in need of all things else besides." A thought which in the famous *Contemplation for Obtaining Love* ripens to enthusiastic prayer: "Give me but Thy love and Thy grace, O Lord; with these I am rich enough, and desire nothing else beyond." Yes, Aloysius felt himself indeed "rich enough" in the love of Him to Whom he had consecrated himself in full abandonment.

A short letter brought the glad news to his mother in Castiglione. The letter ended strangely —with a note of longing for Heaven! It was as if Aloysius himself had a suspicion that with his vow-day the divinely planned measure of his life and his task here on earth were in all essentials complete. The priesthood, which might have been his reward and the fruit of his resignation, was not for him. God wished it so. In the hour of ordination, when the newly ordained priest is espoused to the Church in an everlasting covenant, the step is taken from the kingdom of youth to the full age of manhood; and that, even though the heart retain for ever its youthful freshness. This step Aloysius would never take.

From out the kingdom of youth God the Lord took him to Himself, before there settled on his young shoulders the heavy burden of the earth's dark guilt, which the priest, even the holiest—aye, above all the holiest—priest must bear.

One task only still remained on earth for Aloysius: to perfect his resignation. He had vowed poverty, chastity, and obedience; in the short years that followed he was to preserve himself in perfect poverty, in pure, unwavering love to Christ, in full obedience, and show that even youth is capable of heroic loyalty. He was not yet twenty on his vow-morning, and with twenty-three years his life was done. What lay between was a life just as he had vowed it, poor, pure, obedient; a life of self-abandonment unto the end.

COMPANIONS

ALOYSIUS, the Lonely One! That was what might have been said of him before his entry into the order. Alone he had to seek his path, alone he trod it. During all those years in the courts and palaces the joy of pure and lasting friendship had been denied him.

Did he never sigh for a companion of the same age and with the same ideals as himself, to share with him the joy and the toil of the road? But those whom life threw across his path were too small, too little interested in that "Excelsior" kingdom in which he lived and moved. They felt it themselves, and so did he. And so he remained ever alone—the great Lonely One.

But now in religious life all that was changed. Here he found the travelling-companions whom he had hitherto sought in vain. Young and high-souled like himself, carried onward by the enthusiasm of a pure first love of their ideal, Christ the King.

In such surroundings he felt his heart expand. Now he could develop that side of his character which up to the present unfavourable circumstances had driven largely into the

background: companionableness and community spirit.

It is a proof of the healthy soundness of his character that the years of struggle and loneliness had not made him unnaturally shy and reserved. On the polished floors of palaces he had indeed learned of necessity, while still quite young, a certain caution and discreet restraint; but he had sacrificed nothing of his direct and open character. Indeed, a whole series of witnesses mention the sincerity and straightness of his manners as being quite out of the common. "Everyone could be certain that in his mouth 'Yes' and 'No' possessed their full value, without the slightest trace of ambiguity or dissimulation." (Cepari.) Dishonesty in word or deed was for him, in his own characteristic phrase, "the plague for a young man."

And yet this uncompromising straightness, as experienced observers noticed again and again with astonishment, was united with the most genuine goodness of heart. One witness praises his "incomparable goodness and purity"; another, of a somewhat later date, says: "He thought well of everyone in his heart." These are the opinions of men who knew him very intimately.

"He thought well of all. . . ." A short phrase, yet one which conceals rather than reveals unsounded depths of noble-mindedness and loftiness

of soul. And also years of self-discipline, which alone could produce such fruits in a character so strong.

"He *thought* well. . . ." Did the witness thereby mean to suggest that this attitude of mind did not reveal itself so naturally in Aloysius' outward bearing as other traits of his character? However that may be, we can safely say that if there was one thing more than any other which did *not* come natural to Aloysius, it was "being a man among men." The thought that, even in a religious order, there could be men who either could not, or would not, go for the best with the same energy as he did: that thought was quite obviously new and strange to him. Moreover, his rugged, strong nature, the unconscious relics of his courtly manners, his downright adhesion to principle in word and deed, his undeniable greatness of character: all these combined to cause many a one who was not of his immediate circle to look on him with a certain feeling of uncomfortableness. Aye, in a few cases even, where the fire of youth's idealism no longer burned with all its old-time flame, his very appearance was embarrassing, like a continual sermon.

That is but natural; just as natural as is the fact that Aloysius could not learn how to mix with others in a single night. But one thing is certain; he really *wanted* to learn, and he *did* succeed in learning to sympathize with weakness

as his Master did, and adapt himself to meet it. If one follows his interior development above all in the letters written during these last years, one sees how the "Excelsior" man in him found his way down more and more into the valleys of human weakness, how he learned ever more and more easily to express outwardly his own "thinking well," and how naturally he won more and more the love and confidence of others.

Those who once came to know him remained filled with an unusual reverence for their Fra Luigi. It was the attraction of the mature inner life which they felt in him, it was his purity and limitless great-heartedness that won and held them. And not least of all, the suspicion that this boy stood in grace with God as hardly any other.

So, as the years ran out, Aloysius won without seeking it an ever deeper and sincerer affection in the hearts of his brethren. At his death this affection betrayed itself almost passionately in deeds; and even to-day it echoes in the restrained sadness of "Once upon a time" through the lines in which Cepari speaks of the happiness of those hours when Aloysius was still living and dwelt amongst his friends. It was the enchantment of his idealism which won him hearts.

This it was, too, which brought him the friends of his last years. For that too came to him like a late happiness: pure, true friendship. They

were not many, obviously, to whom the boy revealed himself; he simply was not built for easy and superficial acquaintanceships. But the six or seven who were his friends counted his friendship among the greatest graces of their lives.

In the year 1621—Aloysius was dead over thirty years, and was already beatified—there arrived in Rome a letter from a distant land, from the prisons of Japan where the martyrs of Christ were awaiting their hour of triumph. Carlo Spinola had written after many, many months in prison. And in the letter he asked his brethren in Rome to say a Mass for him at the grave of his blessed brother Aloysius, to beg for him the grace of perseverance and the grace of martyrdom. He could never, he said, forget Aloysius; the memory of him was now his consolation and support.

Spinola was only a few months in Naples with Aloysius. And yet he could never forget him. Aloysius came to his friends from God, not from his own tiny self. That was why his friendship was so strong, so pure—and so eternal.

THE YOUNG APOSTLE

ALOYSIUS was at Frascati for the summer holidays.

There amongst the mountains lay the country house where the young students of the Society spent their vacation in cheery companionship. It was September, 1589, and Aloysius was looking forward to beginning in a few weeks his third year of theology.

Then one day, quite unexpectedly, Fr. Bellarmine arrived at the Frascati farm. He came to see Aloysius. He brought him instructions from Fr. General to return to Rome at once, in order to set off for home as soon as possible on important family business.

A quarter of an hour later found Aloysius, hurried away in the midst of his holidays from the circle of his friends, already on the road to the Eternal City to do what he was told.

He knew why he was being summoned. He was to play the part of peacemaker.

About a year before Orazio, Lord of Solferino and his uncle on his father's side, had died. The dominion of Solferino, which was an imperial fief, should legally have fallen to the ruling

margrave of Castiglione, Aloysius' brother Rodolfo. Don Orazio, however, had left a will making Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, his heir. Rodolfo, the young firebrand, immediately on Don Orazio's death had Castle Solferino occupied by his soldiers. Fortunately, before any further warlike complications ensued, the decision of the Emperor was invoked. After a considerable period had elapsed, the Emperor's verdict arrived; it was against the will and in Rodolfo's favour.

That settled the legal quarrel, but by no means the personal enmity between the two claimants. On the contrary, sycophantic tale-bearers soon brought the matter to such a pass that every attempt at settling the differences was rejected from the very beginning by both parties. Now Aloysius, whose help had been called in by his mother, was to attempt what the immediate relatives and Archduke Ferdinand of Austria had failed to accomplish.

The cleft was no small one, and its bridging no easy task. Aloysius knew that. Rodolfo and Vincenzo were both young, both hot-blooded, and embittered against each other by the misrepresentations of their entourage. Vincenzo, besides, with the bitterness of defeat in his heart, was at enmity with the whole Castiglione clan. It was a case where a reconciliation, if possible at all, might take many months to realize.

But Fr. General gave the commission, and Aloysius obeyed.

The long days of riding northward in the late heat of the Italian autumn were trying enough. However, Aloysius had a faithful companion with him, a lay-brother whose one great concern was the care of Aloysius' health. So the former heir arrived safely in Castiglione, was welcomed with rejoicings by the inhabitants of the little town, borne off to the castle amid pealing of bells and salvoes of cannon, and heartily welcomed by his younger brother.

Aloysius entered the castle—and got a great surprise. He found neither his mother nor any of his young brothers in the place; but in their stead a beautiful young woman, about whose relations with the young margrave he could get only disquieting information.

His mother came in next day from the country house, where she was staying, to the inn below in the little town. After years of separation she met again the son of her love; and that was a glad meeting. Then she poured out to him her troubles. She had had so much to put up with during the last years. Aloysius learned now, too, why she had left the castle. She had given way to the daughter of the margrave's master of the mint, Helena Aliprandi, who had been introduced by Rodolfo in most adventurous fashion into his father's castle. The mother knew no more than

that; and so, in addition to his first task of peacemaker, Aloysius found himself faced with a second, that of clearing up and setting in order this delicate affair.

Aloysius started in courageously. The first thing to do was to clear away the quarrel between Rodolfo and Vincenzo.

He got his brother, therefore, to give him a full account of all that had occurred. The relatives and friends were asked by letter and in person for their assistance in the work of reconciliation; and finally Aloysius set off for Mantua to interview the Duke himself. At first it seemed quite impossible to meet the young lord at home. He kept himself at a distance. Once more Aloysius returned to Castiglione, in order to get Rodolfo's answer to all the complaints that were made against him in Mantua. Then at last, at the beginning of November, he succeeded in obtaining an audience with the Duke. The interview lasted an hour and a half, and achieved complete success. Aloysius accomplished by his conciliatory manners, by his understanding and pleading what the princely mediators in months of exertion had failed to attain. Duke Vincenzo for his part gave up all claims on Solferino, and invited Rodolfo to a solemn reconciliation.

The Duke himself admitted quite openly that this success was to be attributed to the person of the peacemaker. For when it was suggested to

him to wait for a few months before being reconciled, lest the noble lords who originally played the peacemaker without success should be offended by this sudden *volte-face* at the request of a poor religious, his answer was: "I did it precisely because of Aloysius, and I do not care who knows it!"

His first problem was, therefore, happily solved, and more speedily than he had dared to hope. By way of compensation, however, his second problem seemed to become daily more difficult. For when the quarrel with Don Vincenzo was ended, and Aloysius began to urge his brother either to legalize or to dissolve his connection with Helena, Rodolfo met him with fair promises and conciliatory words, but would make no satisfactory statement. Time was running on, and Aloysius himself had to think of beginning his studies again soon. Nevertheless, he was determined to remain near at hand until the matter was settled. He went therefore to Milan, and bound his brother by promise to come to him there and put everything in order.

Weeks passed. Then, in January, 1590, Rodolfo suddenly appeared in the college at Milan and disclosed the true state of affairs—to his brother's no little surprise. A year before he had married Helena; and the marriage, Rodolfo explained, was quite valid in the eyes of the Church, but had been kept absolutely secret. His reason

for this was, lest his marriage with a wife of common blood should estrange his elderly uncle Alfonso, who was nursing the plan of giving Rodolfo the hand of his daughter Katharina. Rodolfo feared that, should his uncle find his cherished plan thwarted, he might take steps to deprive him of the right of inheriting his castle, Castello Guiffredi.

Aloysius gave a sigh of relief. At any rate, his gravest fears had not been realized. There still remained the evil appearances, however, which were a source of grave scandal to Rodolfo's household, and even far beyond the boundaries of the margravate. The marriage, therefore, had to be made public as soon as possible. But against this step Rodolfo still rebelled with all his force.

During this struggle for Rodolfo's soul Aloysius spoke the most earnest words of his whole life. His letters to his brother at this time are warm with brotherly affection, but no less with holy determination. Love of God and the desire of Rodolfo's true happiness made him eloquent. If no one else could gain a hearing, he at least must remind his brother of what as prince he owed his subjects and of what as man he owed his spouse.

A whole month the struggle lasted. Then finally Rodolfo yielded to his elder brother's demands. One thing, however, Aloysius had to

undertake: to explain matters personally to Rodolfo's relatives and subjects.

Aloysius willingly promised. He did not stop to consider the trials and sacrifices which he was thereby taking upon his shoulders. He informed his relatives of the step which Rodolfo had taken a year before, and even contrived by his personal intervention to persuade Don Alfonso, despite his disappointment and the wrecking of his plans, to confirm his brother as heir of that side-branch of the family.

But the key-stone of the whole triumphal arch was undoubtedly the public proclamation of the marriage in Castiglione, which Aloysius himself performed. It was one of the memorable days of his life; and it was more than a mere formality that he was present at the banquet at which his mother, his brother, the younger members of the family, Helena Aliprandi and her father were united for the first time. He had brought back joy and gladness into his father's home.

And when on the day before Quinquagesima below in the little town the messenger of peace invited the people in burning words to the Great Banquet of the Saviour's love, he could feel how his words echoed in the hearts of his hearers, and how the message of God's peace and God's happiness reached and gripped many a one whose life had long been destitute of happiness and peace. Seven hundred came to Confession and

Holy Communion on the Sunday before Lent. A breath of grace went through the land, especially in the families. It is still told that at that time a great number of marriages were set in order, and many a long-divided family found again the path to union.

Aloysius' mission was complete. To please his people, he celebrated March 9th, his birthday, at the castle; then quietly he went his road. Back to Milan, to the religious house, to retirement. The time of public ministry had not yet come.

But had he not disclosed already indications of that power that makes apostles? The strong interior life, which sees all men as images of God; the unyielding loyalty, which surrenders no single jot from the law of Christ; the tenderness, which weighs all burdens carefully before imposing them on weak shoulders; and, above all, the great holy love of those whom God gave him as his brothers: these all were surely signs that Aloysius had seized the spirit of the apostolate. Within him tossed that storm which beat in the words of St. Paul: "*Caritas Christi urget nos*—The charity of Christ presseth us." (2 Cor. v. 14.) And yet he returned—and that was perhaps the greatest triumph of his love—he returned after the first alluring successes of his apostolate back to the silent work of preparation, quiet and simple as before.

He awaited God's call. The test was passed. If God wished, he was ready for all things. To speak or to keep silence, to go or to remain, to work or to rest. As God wished. Out of love for Him.

A DOER OF THE WORD

IT was on the way back from Milan to Rome. Aloysius broke his journey at Siena, where there was a college of the Society. He was just returning from the house where once St. Catherine, the greatest of Siena's daughters, dwelled. He had served Mass in the room of the saint, and had received Holy Communion.

He had hardly returned to the college, when the rector asked him to say a few words to the boys. Aloysius agreed, and went into the church. Kneeling before the tabernacle he thought over what he was going to say; then, returning to his room, he wrote down the headings hastily on a slip of paper, and went to meet the boys. They were awaiting him full of expectation.

What would the visitor, of whom they had heard so much, have to say to them?

Aloysius began with a sentence of St. James the Apostle: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (Jac. i. 22.)

Then he went on to speak of the word of God. How it slips into the soul in the secret whispers of

grace ; how it strikes the ear in some sentence of the Scriptures ; how it speaks to the heart with the persuasive voice of divine benefits and favours. All things from God—all things for God. " All springs come originally from the sea, and to the sea they must return. All water that does not return to the sea from which it comes becomes a stagnant pool. It stands still ; it grows muddy, dirty, and infected.

" So it is with men. The sea of all knowledge and of all virtue is Jesus Christ, the Lord. From Him springs all chastity, all industry of heart and uprightness of will. . . . All gifts of mind and heart come from Him as from their first fountain. And hence to Him all must return, health, power, talent, and abilities. All things must return to Christ."

And then Aloysius spoke to his young hearers of the way each man must go to God, in the way God wills. He told of the nobility of the child of God, and how his highest glory is to " put on Christ," to lay aside the miserable rags of self-love and clothe himself with the wedding-garment of love. He spoke of growing up to full maturity in Christ, when all that is of a child is laid aside, and the strengthened spirit sees everything at its true value, and weighs it by its worth for eternity.

The fruits of the sermon were very great. It was not the success, however, in the case, that was so typical of Aloysius, but rather the thoughts

and the matter of the sermon itself. Aloysius had unwittingly described to the last detail his own inner striving. A doer of the word! Yes, that just described him; that summed up exactly his most striking characteristic. He thought wide and deeply; but he was more than merely a great spiritual thinker. He felt strongly and intimately; but he was no man of religious sentimentality. He was what he here demanded from his young hearers, a man of action, of deed for the faith and for God. A "worker of the word," as the Apostle wished his Christians to be.

In Milan a very experienced Father, who knew of Aloysius' graces in prayer, asked him whether his kind of life in God did not tie him very much to interior things, and make him unfitted for the apostolic labours of the Society. He wished to test Aloysius. The young man's answer was calm and decided: that if he noticed anything of the kind, he would at once with all energy resist this type of communion with God. Such, however, had not been his experience. The truth was, then, that his increased contemplation and spiritual favours gave him always back again the power of action, that in him grace was truly "not in vain." Holy favours and holy actions, holy labour and holy prayer followed one another in his case as naturally as the inspiration and expiration in a healthy man.

To hear and to do, to catch God's word and

put it into practice: that was his interior life. It was a real *life*, a constant motion. He often said that he could never keep pace with the interior light which illumined his road. He went forward; but always the light was before him. He did not realize that by these words he was betraying his own loyalty towards the light that shone within him. For it is only the tireless striver whom this inner light tirelessly woos and precedes.

Aloysius was one of those very few who allow between their knowledge of the truth and its fulfilment none of those thousand hindrances which so often cripple a man's power of action. What he proposed, that he fulfilled; in his own way and in his own time, of course, but inevitably just exactly as he proposed it.

And so the word of God in him did not remain ineffectual, but brought forth fruit an hundredfold. He was not content to hear and to rest in enjoyment; he became a man of action, a "doer of the word," that is—a saint.

HOME-SICKNESS

ALOYSIUS arrived in Rome. It was only then that he felt himself again at home. "If I have a home on earth," he had written to a friend from Milan, "then it is Rome, where I have been born again in Christ Jesus." Everywhere he was received with open arms. The rector of the Roman College especially, in view of the good influence which Aloysius exerted, had asked for his recall from Milan, and was rejoiced to see his wish fulfilled.

But meanwhile in Aloysius' heart there had grown up a very different longing, a home-sickness which even Rome could not appease. At first, however, it was known only to himself and to his confessor.

It had happened in Milan. In the college there, early in the morning at prayer, there had come to him in the light of another world the certainty that the day of his departure for his heavenly home was near. He was to get ready, and be prepared. That was the substance of the message he received.

And with that hour began for Aloysius the last climb to the heights. He came to Rome,

determined to use with all his strength the time that still remained to him, and to prepare himself for the "day of Christ." His purpose rang clearly in the words with which he surprised his friend Cepari: "Now I have buried my dead. I need think of them no more. Now it is time for us to think of the life to come."

He was hardly a few days in the house, when he appeared in Fr. Rector's room bringing the last "own" things he possessed—his own papers, essays, sermons, notes of lectures, etc. The rector was astonished. Why was he bringing him all these things, he asked; surely they might still be of service to him, especially his own compositions? Aloysius answered that they were the last things to which he felt a certain attachment, just because they were his own productions; and because beyond these things there was nothing on earth to which he was inordinately drawn, he wished to separate himself from them also.

After the summer holidays, the last he lived to see, Aloysius began his fourth and last year of theology, at the end of which the priesthood beckoned. It was the custom of the house that Aloysius, now a fourth-year theologian, should have a room to himself. He agreed; but contrived so to arrange matters that he secured a room after his own taste. It was a garret with bare and dirty walls, so low and narrow that there

was scarcely room for the most necessary furniture, and with a sky-light instead of a window. The little cell had never before been occupied by a student. He was the first to settle there—and he felt himself in Paradise. That was the impression which the rector of the house received later on, when he went up to pay a visit to Aloysius in his attic.

The routine of the school-year began. Outwardly Aloysius worked as industriously as of old. And yet his heart nursed the silent conviction that for him the hour of rest was fast approaching, that the faith whose mysteries he was studying would soon be transformed for him into the clarity of vision.

He was drawn ever more and more towards the land of his true home. And that, not in thought merely; the things he felt and thought forced their way into outer expression. He spoke often of death and of heaven with a warmth and enthusiasm which showed how familiar to him these thoughts had become.

One day during the customary reading at table a passage occurred about love of God and longing for God. His table-companions noticed that Aloysius stopped eating, and, as if hypnotized, stared away into the distance. Their first thought was that he was unwell, and so they asked him what the matter was. Then for the first time Aloysius noticed that he was observed. Even

still his inner emotion rendered him incapable of speech; he cast down his eyes in which tears were standing, and his agitation seemed to make him draw his breath with difficulty. It was only towards the end of the meal that he was himself again. He never told where his spirit had been during those few short minutes. But it was not hard to guess. It had been in his everlasting home, the object now of all his longing; that home where alone his restlessness could find its rest, and now so soon should find it.

THE SACRIFICE

BLACK Plague strode through the land. He sent scarcity of crops and famine as his messengers before him, and held a second harvest wherever at his after-coming he found abundant life.

In 1591 he knocked heavily on the doors of Italy. He waited no invitation to come in; the doors sprang apart of their own accord. And so he strode up and down the land, and claimed his booty in town and country. The mighty Sixtus V sank into the grave, and two successors on the chair of Peter followed him within a single year. In Rome and in the rest of Italy the victims were counted by thousands.

Death went about and gathered in his harvest. . . .

Aloysius was listening intently. He felt that the Lord was near, about to call him home. With lamp aburning he wished to haste to meet Him. A longing came over him, strong and holy, to lay down his life in charity, in the service of the plague-stricken. Long ago the desire of a death of sacrifice had ripened within him to maturity. Now was the time.

All his brethren had placed themselves in one way or another at the service of the sick and of those in need. He himself, as one of the less robust, received at first permission merely to go about in the city begging for the poor and for the hospitals, and collecting charitable gifts. From his distant home-land, to Aloysius' great joy, his mother and Rodolfo sent him clothes and alms; and so he was able to greet "his brothers the poor" with full hands. The gifts were needed; for the Roman College alone at that time supported three hundred poor persons regularly, not counting the multitudes who received temporary aid.

But Aloysius wanted more. His ideal was now to die a martyr of charity. And so he kept on asking, until finally real hospital-work was allowed him. Now he saw his path clear, and zeal drove him forward. His predilection was for the poorest and most miserable patients. Years before, when undergoing his "hospital-experiment" as a novice, he had learned to conquer the disgust and revolt of his sensitive nature. His young companions were amazed at the strength of soul Aloysius displayed. He swept them on with him.

One of them fell a victim to the infection. In too eager imitation of his great exemplar he had neglected the warnings of gathering danger, and had worn himself out too soon. With this

example before their eyes the others began to urge Aloysius with increasing anxiety to take more care of himself, and not to gamble so lightly with his life. His only answer was, that he was convinced that God had planted in his heart this longing to serve the sick, and that he would continue as long as superiors did not forbid him.

This prohibition, however, seemed imminent. His superiors came to the conclusion that in the hospital where up till then Aloysius had worked there was grave danger of infection, and forbade him to return. But he began to plead again to be sent to hospital-work, and at last succeeded in persuading the authorities to allot him to a different hospital, Our Lady of Consolation, at the foot of the Capitol. This was considered less dangerous.

March 3rd, 1591, arrived. Aloysius was on his way to the hospital. Lying helplessly in his path he found a man sick of the plague, who had been struck down suddenly in the open street. With a charity which counted no exertions, Aloysius raised the sick man to his feet, placed him on his shoulders, and putting forth all his strength, bore him to Our Lady of Consolation. There he attended to his patient as best he could, and then —he himself swayed dizzily home again, trembling with fever. The exertions of carrying his human burden had been too much for him; and

into his exhausted body the germs of death had found a way.

On arriving home he had to go to bed at once. His bed of sickness was to be his death-bed, too. As he had wished, so came the end.

He who had lived a hero, by God's will died a hero too. A martyr of charity.

TOWARDS ETERNITY

SEVEN days after the beginning of his illness Aloysius hovered on the brink of the grave. This time, however, the angel of death passed by him, to his own great sorrow, to his friends' great joy. Hopes of his recovery began to soar. But Aloysius knew better. He knew that, despite the apparent postponement, his end was very near.

Three full months passed after the first crisis; months of slow, but steady decline of the patient's strength. Then, under the date of June 10th, a letter sped towards Castiglione—the dying boy's farewell letter to his mother.

"*Pax Christi!*

"May the grace and consolation of the Holy Ghost be ever with your Highness!

"Your letter found me still living here in the land of the dead. But I am on the point of going to praise God for all eternity in the land of the living. I had expected to have taken the decisive step long ago. But the fever eased a little after reaching its maximum, and seemed to become somewhat better; and

so I slowly reached the Feast of the Ascension. From that time on, however, the fever increased again; and now I am going step by step towards the embraces of my heavenly Father, on whose breast I hope to rest and to be safe for all eternity.

"Dearest Mother! Love teaches, as St. Paul says, to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who are rejoicing. If this be so, then great indeed must be the joy of your Highness because of the favour that God is giving you in me. For God Our Lord is calling me to the true joy, and is giving me the certainty of never losing it again.

"I must say this: when I look up to the Divine Goodness, to this bottomless, shoreless sea, my spirit loses itself in the depths of His mercies, Who for so short and so trivial labours calls me to an eternal rest; Who invites me and bears me off to Heaven, that highest good which I have sought so negligently; Who promises me the fruit of tears which I have shed so sparingly.

"I beg your Highness to do no injustice to this Goodness of God. This you would do, were you to bewail as dead one who lives in the contemplation of God, and who can now, better than here below, help you with his prayers.

"Our parting will not last so long. Up there we shall meet again and rejoice together

without a fear of future partings. Then we shall be united with our Saviour, shall praise Him with all our strength and exalt His Mercy for all eternity.

" Beyond all doubt we shall open our hearts without difficulty to the faith, and to that simple, unquestioning obedience which we owe to God, if we will but give up our human, earthly way of thinking. We will sacrifice to Him freely and readily that which, after all, belongs to Him already ; and this the more willingly, the dearer the offering is to us. We know quite well that all that God does is done well. And even when He takes back the things He gave us, it is but to store them up for us in a safer home, and to add to them all the good we wish for ourselves.

" My only reason in writing all this is that I should wish your Highness and the whole family to accept my going home as a great gift of grace, to speed me on my journey with your maternal blessing, and to stand by me with your prayers during my crossing to that other shore, where the realization of all my hopes is beckoning.

" There remains for me but one thing more : to pay you once more the tribute of love and reverence which I owe you.

" I conclude in asking once more humbly for your blessing."

It was Aloysius' last letter. He himself had no longer strength to write it; he dictated it to one of his brethren, and instead of his name wrote with trembling hand a cross at the foot.

The depths of Aloysius' soul were striving here for words to express that which alone moved him now. The atmosphere of the day before the Resurrection morning floats over the whole. "I wish to be dissolved and to be with Christ" echoes with scarcely controlled desire in every line.

The full, glorious day had not yet broken; but the rosy dawn was trembling in the sky. The morning-breath of eternity surrounded the spirit of the dying boy. It is as if at every moment the cry of heavenly longing is about to be transformed into the Alleluia of the blessed. Aloysius was "going towards the embraces of his heavenly Father." It was the certainty of this which filled him with that joy and burning desire, which ruled over the last days of his illness.

He spoke only of heaven; and if anyone told him that he should pray for his recovery, his answer came each time with a ring of complete conviction: "It is better to be dissolved and to be with Christ!" With ever-growing pleasure he listened eagerly, when Psalms lxxxviii and cxxi, the songs of longing and of love, were read aloud to him. "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and

fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . . I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord."

One evening a few days before his death, Aloysius asked Fr. Bellarmine, with all the simplicity of a child, whether he thought that anyone could go direct to God without passing through Purgatory.

Bellarmine told him, yes, if a soul were quite pure and holy, certainly it might go straight to God. And he added that, judging by all he knew of him, even this last grace might be given to Aloysius. The answer which held out such a prospect before him overwhelmed the dying boy. Time and space seemed to vanish in an excess of joy. When Fr. Bellarmine asked him next morning how he passed the night, he could only say that it had appeared to him like a single fleeting moment.

Eternity with its light and happiness was dawning. Earth's night was drawing near its close.

GOING HOME!

THE evening of June 20th was settling down. It was Thursday, the Octave of Corpus Christi. Aloysius himself had given the assurance several days before that he would die within the Octave of Corpus Christi; and when on this last morning of the Octave his attendant reminded him of his prophecy, and said that he must have made a mistake, for he seemed better than usual, the sick youth replied quietly and with conviction that he would die that day.

There was a tense, holy atmosphere about those last few hours. Aloysius hardly spoke a word. Only from time to time he asked, ever more urgently, that he might be brought Holy Communion as Viaticum. He said that he would certainly die that day.

Towards evening the rector learned of his desire, and promised to fulfil it. He came, bearing the Lord in his hands; and all the household followed him.

The words sounded through the room: "Receive, brother, the Viaticum of the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may defend thee from the malignant enemy and preserve thy soul

unto life eternal." Then stillness came back again, as the Lord for the last time under the sacramental veils entered the tabernacle of this human heart.

All present were deeply moved. Aloysius' face was aglow with joy and gratitude. A few hours more, and the veils would fall; and he would see his Lord " as He is, face to face."

A little while later he asked leave to say good-bye to each in turn, and was permitted to do so. Many an intimate word was spoken, and many a warm tear shed during his last adieux. ("*A Dieu*"—" To God! "—the French term names his parting greeting well.) All realized now fully what this boy had been to them. He promised them his love " there where for the first time love becomes really great and pure "—in heaven. It was one of his favourite thoughts that only in God would his love for his own here below reach its full perfection.

About the time of the " Angelus " the sick-room began to empty gradually. The rector of the house wished it so. Three fathers only were to stay up to watch by his bedside. Aloysius named them himself. That the end would come very quickly, no one but Aloysius himself believed.

Night came on, and Aloysius was alone. One priest only was in the room with him. Every time he looked across at the bed, he saw Aloysius lying awake and praying. The father came over

to the bedside, and asked him if he wanted anything.

"Watch with me, Father—I am dying!" That was the answer, and it came a second and a third time shortly afterwards. Earnestly, but quite calmly.

The priest hesitated. The patient was still fully conscious, and there was no sign of death-agony. What did the boy mean? The father approached the bed again, and asked Aloysius if he could help him in any way. For the first time in many months of sickness, a request which seemed tinged by a faint note of impatience came from Aloysius' lips. Would the father please turn him over and lay him on the other side? Not a suggestion even yet that the constant lying had caused deep, painful bed-sores all along his right side. The priest called in one of his companions from the neighbouring room. He came, and with him the attendant. And now, in the light of the candles, they saw the pallor and the cold sweat of death on Aloysius' face. The father had to tell him that the least movement might hasten death, and asked him to accept in patience this last drop from the chalice of suffering. Aloysius obeyed—to the very end.

The room became very still. A candle was lighted and placed between the numbing fingers. Aloysius clasped it with one hand, and with the other pressed tight upon his breast his crucifix.

His eyes were fixed immovably on the cross at the end of the bed.

It was about eleven o'clock.

Then, just once more, faint as a slow breath, there came from the dying lips a lingering "Jesus!" A slight trembling ran through the frame. Aloysius had gone home.

ALOYSIUS

ALOYSIUS' earthly course was run. Only twenty-three, he had reached his goal—a conqueror. That was the impression of all those who pressed around his pallet from the morning of June 21st onwards, not to pray for him, but to pray him for his intercession with God.

He was hardly in his grave when the streams of devotion to him burst forth, and spread far beyond the Eternal City over the whole Catholic world.

That his fame spread so rapidly and was welcomed so joyfully in all lands, is undoubtedly due, at least in part, to the many extraordinary miracles by which God began to glorify His servant immediately after his death. But that was not the only explanation. There was something else about him which won him hearts—and especially the hearts of the young, who adopted him enthusiastically as their patron and have never relinquished their devotion to him. Not what he gave or did was the real reason of their admiration, but what he *was*, and what he meant to youth.

The outward product of his life might seem at

first sight slight enough—though a clear observer will hardly hesitate to call it big, fruitful, and productive. It must be granted that he never got beyond his time of training. He wrote no books. He played no great part in history. He left behind him no visible monument which has lasted down the ages. His is a greater achievement. He has filled thousands and tens of thousands of young hearts with enthusiasm for the highest ideals of Christian youth. He has kept clean and made clean countless growing lives. He has called into being an "order" without a name, without written constitutions, and without a common habit, which has numbered knightly young heroes by the thousand among its members, and numbers them still today. An order whose only laws are the laws written in the hearts of pure and holy youth.

And the secret of this success? It lies in this alone, that his life was fully and perfectly what it ought to be: a life after God's own heart.

A modern writer (Förster) has beautifully said: "Even if we try to achieve nothing greater than we can accomplish with a clean conscience and with clean hands amid the persons and circumstances with whom we have to deal, nevertheless . . . a higher life develops from our humblest beginnings, and the most frail work, which we are tempted to abandon half finished, becomes the dwelling of the Holy Ghost on earth."

The saying was fulfilled in Aloysius. He began under circumstances which made his task anything but easy. He began early, and held on. Once he had learned what he as God's child owed to God, he fulfilled his duties as a child of God with wonderful conscientiousness, loyalty, and perseverance. His thought was very simple: if an earthly father and an earthly king were deserving of honour, as education, etiquette, and reason told him, then his Father and King in Heaven deserved all that and infinitely more. Measured boundaries to his service his straight, clear thinking did not recognize. He knew no limits for God. To enjoy his young years in selfishness and leave over for God the remains of a wasted life; for that he was too noble minded. His whole thought and effort was that no single moment and no single fibre of his being should go to waste, but that all should be spent in the joyous service of his Captain and his King.

His prayer, his work, his early vow of chastity, his entry into religious life, all was directed to this one goal. *Deo inserviendo consumor*—In God's service my powers are consumed: the motto might have been written truthfully over all his doings. It summed up his youth, and hence his life.

On the coat-of-arms of his ancestors another watchword stood: "*Fides—Olympos!*" To it, too, Aloysius brought meaning and fulfilment.

Fides—Loyalty: that was his road; *Olympos*—Eternity was his goal! "The measuring-rods of *eternity*," he wrote once in his spiritual notes, were to be the standards with which he would measure the things of time; and he kept his purpose *loyally*. Is it a wonder that many of the apparently so important earthly values shrank to nothing when measured with such a scale? Eternity is a tremendous measure, in presence of which even the greatest things of earth subside to insignificance. But it was just because Aloysius had set his life by everlasting standards that there floats out from him even here on earth a breath of the imperishable, of the eternal.

But the crown of Aloysius' life was love. Fearless insistency in action is a grand quality—but it becomes fruitful only through love. Zeal, loyalty, purity are blossoms that bloom only in a splendid character—and they get their full beauty and sweet odour from love. That is the finest thing in Aloysius' passionate quest, that it led him more and more from multiplicity of virtues to the unity of love.

He was young when love first lived within his breast; that divine flame of love which descends so very willingly on the altar of a pure heart. Love glowed in his cheeks when he went to Holy Communion. Love beat in his breast and urged him as a boy to cross the seas to distant lands and preach the Good Tidings to the heathen.

But love's last and greatest triumph was when he finally resigned his whole self to God and in religion wore out the last remnants of his strength in love of God and man. Love of God and of the Saviour is the one explanation of the extraordinary side of this young life. Love alone explains and glorifies his penance, beatifies his dazzling purity, and surrounds his earnest figure with imperishable charm.

And so " with a clean conscience and with clean hands " he could lay down his work when God called him. He left it uncompleted, if by completeness we mean that perfection of many-sided maturity, which—if it be possible here on earth at all—is a quality of age and not of youth. That there was room in him for growth in experience, in prudence, in knowledge of men and things, is certain. But in these things completeness was not asked of him. One thing he did complete and perfect: the unreserved abandonment of love. He loved God in truth " with his whole heart and with all his strength " ; and at no later time could he have done more. And so—despite his seeming incompleteness—he fulfilled the work which God required of him.

And so, too, his life's achievement became " the dwelling of the Holy Ghost on earth." A guide and friend of youth, Aloysius stands in the stream of time, and ceaselessly around his feet break the waves of fresh, young lives. " See ye," he seems

to call to them, "I have not laboured for myself alone, but for all that seek discipline and truth." (Eccl. xxiv. 47; cf. xxxiii. 18.)

It is the kingly mountain-path of idealism to which he points, the path to the fountains of the Saviour and of His Church, to purity, strength, love, happiness, and greatness that does not pass away.

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